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Platonism. in Spenser

By

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1920

PRINTED BY ATULCHANDRA BHATTACHARYYA,
AT THE CALCUTTA UNIVERSITY PRESS, SENATE HOUSE, CALCUTTA.

Dedicated

To

The Memory of my Father,

Late RAJANIKANTA BHATTACHARYYA

Preface

This dissertation, with the exception of Chapter II., was submitted in 1918 as a thesis in support of my candidature for the Premchand Roychand Studentship of the University of Calcutta. Chapter II. was written later and was included in the statement of my research for the year 1919. The arrangement of the chapters adopted in the original thesis has now been completely changed and numerous corrections and alterations have been made in it in the light of information subsequently collected. Yet I am afraid I have not been able to make the work as thorough and up-to-date as I would like it to be.

As my thesis was to be examined by a board of scholars, every remark made in it was sought to be substantiated with quotations. They may now stand in the way of easy reading; but their removal is impossible without the re-writing of the whole thing, and I have purposely refrained from it.

The present volume is a reprint of my thesis from the second number of the *Journal of the Department of Letters of the Calcutta University*. This accounts for the paging and the appearance of my name at the top of every left-hand page.

Owing to the hurry with which the Press had to do its work, some mistakes crept in, notwithstanding all possible caution. They have been pointed out and corrected in the list of *Errata*, but there may be others which have escaped my notice.

I should like to take this opportunity of acknowledging my obligations to Mr. J. W. Holme, Professor of English, Presidency College, Calcutta, for valuable advice and constant help. My thanks are also due to Dr. Brajendra Nath Seal, King George V Professor of Philosophy in the Calcutta University, for some highly useful suggestions regarding the philosophical topics discussed by me.

CALCUTTA :
August, 1920. }

MOHINIMOHAN BHATTACHARYYA.

ERRATA.

<i>Reference.</i>	<i>Incorrect.</i>	<i>Correct.</i>
P. 277, l. 29	Nenio	Nennio
P. 278, Footnote	Einstain	Einstein
P. 280, l. 10	typified	is typified
P. 280, l. 13	further	farther
P. 286, l. 2	solitary	limited
P. 289, l. 33	jowett	Jowett
P. 298, Marginal Note	Shepherds	Shepheards
P. 299, l. 3	possesses	passes
P. 302, l. 31	peans	pæans
P. 307, l. 21	who be	who should be
P. 344, l. 15	mind or	mind nor
P. 349, l. 11	into world	into the world
P. 355, l. 18	basis	the basis
P. 361, Footnote	Fairie	Faerie
P. 362, l. 10	with	to
P. 363, l. 26	dealt	dwelt
P. 367, Marginal Note	Phaedrus	Symposium
P. 377, „	Pastyme	Pastime
F. 393, Footnote	Pico's	Pico's
P. 427, l. 20	into	into the

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Platonism in Spenser

BY

MOHINIMOHAN BHATTACHARYYA, M.A., B.L.,

Premchand Roychand Student

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Spenser has been called the child of the Renaissance. But in form his greatest work is distinctly mediæval.

Trace of the Renaissance in Spenser—not so much to be found in the form or mechanical details of his poems,

Chivalry¹ furnishes its framework, and knights, dwarfs, and distressed damsels march before the reader's eye in a curious procession. Jousts and tournaments, bloody contests with Saracens and infidels bring back to remembrance the echo of the magic blast of Roncesvalles. All the creations of the imagination in which the mediæval mind delighted so much—witches, hags, giants and demons—lend a strange glamour to the picture. It is natural that in this wonderful work Spenser should have desired² to rival his master Ariosto, the great poet of chivalry.³

¹ Desire expressed in a letter to Harvey.

² For the striking points of resemblance between the *Orlando Furioso* and the *Faerie Queene*, see Einstein's *Italian Renaissance in England*, p. 341 and p. 343; also the Proceedings, Modern Language Association, 1897, p. 70 *et seq.*

Where, then, is the trace of the Renaissance? It is rather to be sought in the general tone and spirit of the poet. The Renaissance had first affected England as a religious movement which had raised its head as a protest against the corruption and the rigours of the Church. A quickening of sympathy, an interest in the well-being of mankind, a keen sense of Beauty—these were the effects which followed later and which manifested themselves in a different class of people. In Spenser, however, both these aspects of the movement are found in a healthy combination.¹ The Revival of classical learning was mainly responsible for the aesthetic and humanistic tendencies of his age. But the influence of Plato which Spenser imbibed as the result of his classical scholarship not only dignified his conception of Beauty and broadened his sympathy, but also added to his moral enthusiasm. Thus the Renaissance may be said to have affected Spenser mainly through his Platonic studies and his Platonism may be described as summing up the main influence of the Renaissance on him.

Platonism in Spenser is "distinct from the Christianised Neo-Platonism which culminated in the ninth century when Joannes Scotus (Erigena) popularised the doctrines of the so-called Dionysius the Areopagite, embodied in his book the 'Celestial Hierarchy.'"² It means Plato's Philosophy studied in his original dialogues, with the addition of the Neo-Platonism of Plotinus. There is abundant evidence to show that though Spenser studied Plato in the original, he also laid under contribution the commentary on the Symposium by Ficinus the renowned translator of Plato under the Medicis and Pico della

Platonism, the mark of the Renaissance in Spenser—its nature and sources—

¹ Dowden—Spenser as poet and teacher.

² Cambridge History of English Literature, Vol. III.

Mirandola's treatise on Neo-Platonism entitled "A Platonic Discourse on Love." Ficinus also translated into Latin the Enneads of Plotinus and wrote commentaries on them. Spenser is indebted to these also. In the 15th and 16th centuries Ficinus and Pico della

Mirandola were the recognised interpreters of Plato in Europe. "Originated in the Platonic Academy at Florence,"

Ficino and Pico, their Platonism "was taken up by the reforming party throughout Europe, and was specially favoured in the Universities of Paris and Cambridge." And it must be remembered that Cambridge was Spenser's Alma Mater. Besides the commentaries of Ficinus and Pico, there were the discourses on Platonic Love in the Italian courtesy-books of the 15th century, the most important

of which is the Cortegiano. Guazzo's Castiglione, Guazzo, • Civil Conversation and Annibale Romei's Romei and Bembo Discorsi followed Bembo's oration on love in the Cortegiano. Spenser was more or less indebted to all these works.

It seems to many that Spenser was influenced only by Plato's theories of Love and Beauty, and consequently only

Influence of Plato's philosophy noticeable not only in the Hymns, but also in the Faerie Queene.

the Hymns of Spenser are mentioned as illustrating his Platonism. But the "Faerie Queen," too, when closely studied, shews the clear impress of Platonic ideas on Spenser's thought and outlook. Too much has been made of Spenser's letter to Raleigh and critics have taken their stand on these few lines to argue that the Faerie Queene is nothing but an exposition of the Nicomachean Ethics, and that the virtues typified in the knights must have an Aristotelian origin. Considerable support seems to be given to this theory by the conversation which Spenser

had in Ireland with Lodovick Bryskett. Finding it difficult to understand philosophical works in the original Greek, Bryskett in an assembly which gathered at a cottage near Dublin, requested Spenser to discourse on "*the Ethicke part of Morall Philosophie.*" Spenser begged

Why critics admitted the influence of Aristotle only on the Faerie Queene—Spenser's Letter to Raleigh.

to be excused, saying "It is not unknown unto you that I have already undertaken a work tending to the same effect, which is in heroical verse under the title of a Faerie Queene to represent all the *moral virtues*, assigning to every virtue a knight to be the patron and defender of the same..... And the same may very well serve for my excuse if at this time I crave to be forborne in this your request..... For it would require good advisement and premeditation for any man to undertake the declaration of these points that you have proposed, containing in effect the *Ethicke part of Morall Philosophie.*"¹ And it is well-known that Aristotle was the first to distinguish moral from intellectual (dianoetic) virtue, and his Ethics is professedly a moral treatise.² Hence Aristotle rather than Plato has been looked upon as furnishing the main moral conceptions in the Faerie Queene, and virtues like Chastity and Holiness have been sought to be traced to the Nicomachean Ethics.

But it is a mistake to pin Spenser down to the exact lines of his letter to Raleigh. His debt to Aristotle does not preclude the possibility of Plato's influence; on the contrary Platonism comes in inspite of his profession of strict adherence to Aristotle. There are obvious reasons why Spenser should have expressed himself as following Aristotle, and the letter to Raleigh itself gives one of the reasons.

Reasons why Spenser mentions only Aristotle in his Letter.

¹ Hales on Edmund Spenser in the Globe Edition and Dean Church's monograph on Spenser in the E. M. L. Series, p. 82

² Aristotle's Ethics, Bk. I, ch. XI

Authors in Spenser's days liked to be the followers of renowned precedents, and Spenser states how moral and political virtues as distinguished apparently by Aristotle¹ had been dealt with in Tasso and Ariosto, not to mention Homer and Virgil, the former of whom flourished long before Aristotle. "Ariosto comprised them both in his Orlando, and lately Tasso dissevered them againe and formed both parts in two persons, namely that part which they in Philosophy call Ethice, or virtues of a private man coloured in his Rinaldo; the other named Politice in his Godfredo." He then says significantly, "By *ensample of which excellent Poets*, I labour to pourtraict in Arthur before he was King, the image of a brave knight perfected in the.... twelve private morall vertues, *as Aristotle hath devised*." Spenser describes himself as a follower of Aristotle, simply because his master Ariosto had drawn upon the Ethics copiously.

There is another reason why he should have expressly followed Aristotle. His aim in composing the Faerie Queene was didactic and educational. "The generall end therefore of all the booke is to fashion a gentleman or noble person in vertuous and gentle discipline." This was also the aim of the Italian courtesy-books to which Spenser was indebted for his Platonic ideas on Love. Though following Ficinus and Pico in their conception of Love, the authors of these books bestowed the virtues of Aristotle on their ideal gentlemen. The moral excellence insisted on in the Cortegiano is derived from the Ethics.² Il Nennio expounds at length the doctrine of the mean. In Muzio's Gentilhuomo the emphasis laid on good birth³ and virtue as the mark of a

¹ Ethics, Bk. I, ch. XI.

² Modern Language Review, Vol. V, p. 152

³ Ethics, Bk. I, ch. VI. "Some things there are, again, a deficiency in which mars blessedness; *good birth*, for instance, or fine offspring, or even personal beauty."

typical courtier is also Aristotelian in origin as is, likewise, the doctrine of the mean.¹ Castiglione is of opinion that though high virtues are necessary in a gentleman, noble birth has its value. Guazzo in his *Civil Conversation* bitterly complains against the indifference with which this Aristotelian virtue was apt to be regarded by the society in his days. "Men had rather be born gentlemen and have nothing in the world but their rapier and cloak, than to be descended of base parentage and to be senators and presidents."² Following as he did these Italian authors in some respects Spenser naturally drew on Aristotle's *Ethics* for his conception of the virtues which he thought indispensable in an ideal gentleman, and readily acknowledged with pride his debt to the Stagirite.

Such are the reasons why Spenser professed to follow Aristotle in his *Letter to Raleigh*. And though he tried to be true to his profession in actual practice, he could not shake off the deep influence of the Philosophy of Plato, with the result that the Platonic tinge sticks to the Aristotelian virtues like temperance, chastity (in Aristotle it is modesty) and friendship.

Platonism in the *Faerie Queene* shines out clearly when it is compared with the "*Orlando Furioso*." The princely patron of Ariosto, when presented with a copy of his newly-finished poem, is said to have expressed his appreciation of the genius of the author by the question, "Where did you find so many stories, Master Ludovic?" Though it does not show the liberality of the prince, the remark partly indicates the source of the popularity and interest of the poem. Its attraction lies in the strange variety of its stories, the copiousness of its episodes and

¹ *Modern Language Review*, Vol. V, p. 154.

² Lewis Einstein's *Italian Renaissance in England*, p. 63.

the seriousness of its artistic conscience. There is nothing in the tone and in the sentiments which enlightens or purifies, which quickens moral sense or broadens moral outlook and raises us above the grosser realities of life. This, however, cannot be said of Spenser's poem. Though chivalry furnishes the background in both, and though the pupil often faithfully follows the master, their differences are striking enough. "Even where Spenser made use of characters and situations suggested by Ariosto, and of descriptions by Tasso, the Faerie Queene was yet written in a spirit far different from that which inspired the Italian Romantic epic. Its austerity inclined rather to the Platonism of Petrarch than the easy self-indulgence of Ariosto, or the high-coloured seriousness of Tasso."¹ "The one poet was the Puritan Platonist of the English Renaissance inheriting the traditions of mediæval allegory; the other was the child of sixteenth century Italy, the contemporary of Machiavelli and Aretino."² The contrast between the two poets is further brought out in a picturesque passage of Hallam: "The Italian is gay, rapid, ardent; his pictures shift like the hues of Heaven... Spenser is habitually serious; his slow stanza seems to suit the temper of his genius. He loves to dwell on the sweetness and beauty which his fancy portrays. The ideal of chivalry, rather derived from its didactic theory than from the precedents of Romance, is always before him. His morality is pure and stern with nothing of the libertine tone of Ariosto."³ The beauty and sweetness on which, as Hallam says, Spenser loves to dwell and the pure morality which is so characteristic of him are the striking

Spenser compared
with Ariosto and Tasso
—Platonism in his idea
of Love.

¹ Einstein's *Italian Renaissance in England*, p. 342.

² *Ibid.*, p. 344.

³ *Literature of Europe*, Vol. II

manifestations of his Platonism. Here is to be seen the propriety of the remark which Sir Walter Scott made on the great Elizabethan poet—"A better Teacher than Scotus or Aquinas."

✓ One illustration will show the difference between Ariosto and Spenser. Love in the *Orlando Furioso* is either a gross, vulgar passion, or the common human feeling or a sick sentimentality, the butt of cynic ridicule. In a host of characters notably in Rogero (in Alcyna's clutches) typified the first kind of love and in Orlando the second. The madness of Orlando is only a device to show¹ the deplorable consequences of love on young minds. Ariosto's conception of love goes thus far and no further. Ariosto cannot even dream of a love, not enervating or degrading but noble and inspiring, love that urges men on to aspire after noble things and attempt noble deeds. But it is this ideal of love, which is to be met with in Spenser.

"—that sweete fit that doth true beautie love,
And choseth vertue for his dearest Dame,
Whence spring all noble deedes and never dying fame:"

(F.Q. Bk. III, C. III, I).

Tasso had a more exalted ideal of love than Ariosto. The relation between Tancred and Erminia and between Rinaldo and Armida is different from the commonplace love found in chivalric stories and is of a more spiritual nature. How far Spenser was influenced by Tasso's ideal¹ is uncertain and an enquiry into this is beyond the scope of this paper.

To compare Spenser's Platonism with Platonism in other English poets would be a tremendous task and require quite a separate treatise. Yet some attempt must be made to characterise Spenser's Platonism and to indicate its peculiarity. It has already been stated that

¹ "A briefe Allegorie of Orlando Furioso," by Harrington.

✓ Spenser saw Plato through the Italian Neo-Platonists and through Plotinūs. These were the recognised channels through which many English writers of the 16th and 17th centuries sought the acquaintance of Plato, *e.g.*, William Drummond, John Donne, and the Cambridge

Platonism in Spenser, Drummond, Donne, contrasted with Platonism in Wordsworth and in Shelley.

Platonists. They accepted the interpretation of these commentators and used and incorporated it in their writings.

These Elizabethans are to be distinguished from 19th century poets like Wordsworth and Shelley on whom also the influence of Plato is very distinct. The latter imbibed just the gist and essence of Plato's teaching while the former took it in with all its subsequent elaborations. Platonism only affected the latter's outlook on Nature, God and Soul, and created in them a mood, while in the case of the former, besides doing this it had taught a parallelism between Christianity and Platonic Philosophy and the affinity of the latter for Christian ideas.¹ Platonism in these 19th Century poets may be called personal Platonism, while the Platonism of Spenser and other 16th century poets may be called "traditional Platonism." Platonism in general or personal Platonism is love of the unseen and eternal cherished by one who rejoices in the seen and temporal. The Platonist feels "this invisible and eternal world present behind or, when the mood is most pressing, within the visible and temporal world, and sustaining both it and himself—a world not perceived as external to himself, but inwardly lived by him, as that with which, at moments of ecstasy or even habitually he is become one." This explains the presence which Wordsworth felt behind the beautiful scenes of the Highlands, rivers and mountains. "But traditional Platonism enlarges, and adds detail to the outline

Personal and traditional Platonism.

¹ Einstein's Italian Renaissance in England, p. 345.

description which is sufficient for personal Platonism and we are told that the man, who, in the temporal world, is haunted by the presence of the eternal world, is a Lover—that, from love of the visible and temporal, he is lifted up to love of the invisible and eternal world, of the existence of which his love is itself the sure evidence. Further, we are told that it is with its conjoined ideas, or Powers, of Goodness, Truth, and Beauty, operating, for one end, through the agency of a hierarchy of dependent Ideas or Powers, that the world invisible and eternal—sometimes the world, sometimes God—sustains the world visible and temporal. Further, we are told that the world so created is a living creature which has soul as well as body, and that it is through the intermediation of this created ‘soul of the world’ or ‘Plastic spirit of Nature,’ that the operation of God or of the eternal world of Ideas, actually reaches matter and moulds it into the form of the world visible and temporal”¹ The hierarchy of Ideas or Powers mentioned above had been identified with the Angels, Powers, Domi-

Spenser's Platonism
is traditional.

nations of the Christian Church, and Spenser's Hymns to Heavenly Love and Heavenly Beauty shew traces of this identification. The Soul of the world, the Daemon, the Plastic spirit of Nature represent ideas familiar to readers of Shelley. Spenser's Platonism is thus thoroughly traditional; Shelley's Platonism is more traditional than Wordsworth's though less so than Spenser's.

Walter Pater says “For Plato all knowledge was like knowing a person.”² This is Plato's Realism. He is not fond of abstract qualities and he cannot argue about them or discourse on them as if they are the products of

¹ “Platonism in English Poetry” in “English Literature and the Classics,” Clarendon Press.

² Plato and Platonism.

generalisation. He invests them with a separate existence, and the soul actually beholds in Heaven "Justice, Temperance, and Knowledge Absolute." This Realism of Plato has its effect on Spenser. It is due to Plato's influence that Spenser typifies virtues like chastity, temperance and justice in human characters. The elaborate allegories he constructs to illustrate by means of incidents and episodes the nature of these virtues show the work-

The Realism of Plato—how it affects Spenser.

ing of the same influence. "Spenser borrows in fact the delicate and refined forms of the Platonic Philosophy to express his own moral enthusiasm...Justice, Temperance, Truth are no mere names to him, but real existences to which his whole nature clings with a rapturous affection." "With Spenser, as with Plato, abstractions acquire a separate individual existence being in fact, embodied as so many persons."²

Such is the general nature of Plato's influence on Spenser. But in order to ascertain its extent and importance it is necessary to go into the subject more fully. The best way to do this is to examine in detail the leading ethical, philosophical and æsthetic conceptions in Spenser and trace them to Plato's works or to commentaries on them as far as possible. An attempt has been made to do this in the following pages. Critics think that Spenser's works shew two different periods of Platonic influence. The early period covered by the Shepherd's Calender and some portions of the Faerie Queene comprises Platonism pure and simple, and the later period represented mainly by the two later Hymns and Amoretti shews a tinge of Neo-Platonism in his Platonic ideas. The whole subject has accordingly been divided into two convenient

Platonism and Neo-Platonism—Method of study.

¹ Phædrus.

² Benn—The Greek Philosophers, Vol. II, p. 370.

portions, and the purely Platonic conceptions in Spenser have been dealt with separately from ideas coloured with Neo-Platonism. But neither Platonic nor Neo-Platonic ideas are to be found in Spenser in their original forms ; in fact, they are largely mixed up with Aristotelian and Christian notions. To estimate correctly Spenser's debt to Plato and his followers, it has consequently been necessary to sift their ideas as found in his works from ethical and philosophical conceptions derived from other sources, and to shew them in their true colours.

Pure Platonism

CHAPTER II

THEORY OF POETRY

Discussions on the function and nature of Poetry fall within the province of Literary Criticism. English Literary Criticism was in its infancy in the Elizabethan Age, and hence crude and tentative. Although the germ of many later theories lay embedded in it, Literary Criticism of 16th-century England often misdirected itself and overstepped its legitimate bounds. It arose in controversy, and was violently partisan in spirit; it included within its scope rhetoric as well as philology

Elizabethan theories of Literary art and of Poetry, as revealed in the prose treatises on criticism of that age, had many foreign sources

and was chiefly aimed at the moral defence of poetry. Yet it was not of purely indigenous growth. Like the literature, the criticism of that age too had many foreign sources. Aristotle and Horace, Italian and French Criticism, both Latin and vernacular, of the 16th century were freely drawn upon. The common-place dictum about imitation (*mimesis*), the comparison of Poetry with History, the theory of the three unities are to be traced to Aristotle. The Horatian notion that the poet is legislator and vates, is also to be found in the essays of these times. In rhetorical matters the influence of Cicero is discernible. But Plato was quoted by

but Plato was not one of them, though Aristotle was.

critics only for the purpose of censuring poets and his verdict of banishment against them was often referred to. Even this was relied upon, and Plato's authority was

invoked, only by purists like Gosson. But apart from this solitary reference, the Elizabethan critics' debt to Plato is negligible in comparison with their copious borrowings from the canons of Horace, Aristotle and their French and Italian followers. "There is nothing in Elizabethan criticism corresponding to the influence exerted by the Platonic Philosophy on the works of the contemporary poets and thinkers."¹

The reason of this curious phenomenon, however, is not far to seek. Plato loved symbols and expressed himself in figurative language. Even his observations on Music and Poetry are veiled in poetic imagery. He was not a framer of set rules; on the contrary he examined the foundations of beliefs and ideas and tried to arrive at a comprehensive principle underlying them all. But criticism in the Elizabethan times was dogmatic, consisting in the application of rigid rules to works of Art. The canons of Aristotle, Horace, and the Renaissance critics lent themselves to this sort of handling easily, and consequently, Elizabethan criticism bears traces of these rather than of the Platonic ideas concern-

Platonic theories of Poetry can be expected not in set treatises but in the works of a contemplative poet like Spenser.

ing Art and Music. For the latter it is necessary to go not to professed critics and essayists, but to men who by virtue of their temperament and mood could appreciate the poetic genius of Plato.

In Elizabethan England none was more imbued with the teachings of the Academy, none was fitter by temperament and mentality to imbibe them than Spenser. This explains why Spenser did not contribute anything to the systematic critical efforts of his times. The method of rational inquiry and patient investigation on the lines laid down by predecessors was foreign to his genius. He indeed belonged to the Areopagus, the well-known

¹ Gregory Smith.

literary coterie including Sidney, and he must have been familiar with the contemporary attacks on Poetry and the attempts of critics to defend it and to define its nature and function. Sidney defended poets against the charge of lying and Roger Ascham, following Aristotle and Horace, defined Poetry as an art of imitation. Webbe, Puttenham and others examined the nature of Heroic Poetry and stated that it was the most accomplished kind of Poetry. But no trace of this type of criticism is to be found even in Spenser's Letters to Harvey,—the few pages of prose he devoted to critical work, though these are witnesses of his abortive attempt at the introduction of classical prosody into English under the advice of his learned friend. For Spenser's ideas on the nature of Poetry, we have therefore to go to his poems. Since these ideas were taken from the poetic pages of Plato, it is but natural that they should find a fit medium of expression in Poetry. *

Plato's views on Poetry were determined by the place it held in Hellenic culture. The Greeks felt its effect at every turn in their daily life. "The rhapsode moved the crowds to laughter and tears at the festivals; the theatres were free, or almost free to all 'costing but a drachma at the most,' the intervals of a banquet were filled up by conversation about the poets."¹ Thus the influence which the poet exercised on the Greeks of Plato's times and consequently the opportunity which he had of shaping and moulding their character and temperament were considerable. A large part of elementary education consisted in learning poetry by heart and generally both information and instruction were conveyed to young minds through the medium of Poetry. Hence obviously poetry was a very important factor of

* Plato's views on Poetry determined by its place in the intellectual life of the Greeks of his days.

¹ Jowett.

the education of the youth. Poetry in those days included music, for its appeal was strongest when it was set to music. Illiterate people in ancient times had no taste for poetry as such. When poems were not set to music, they had to be recited in order to be appreciated by the people. Plato's remarks therefore apply both to poetry and music.

In poetry Plato recognised three distinct parts—the story or the words, the melody or harmony and rhythm.¹ Plato decided what sort of story was likely to be beneficial to the state, and it is well-known

Poetry in Plato includes music. Its three parts,—story, melody and rhythm

how he prescribed banishment for those writers of fiction who ascribed vices to the gods. He was equally careful in the choice of harmony or

melody. "Of the harmonies I know nothing, but I want to have one warlike, to sound the note or accent which a brave man utters in the hour of danger and stern resolve"² These were the Dorian and Phrygian harmonies. In the choice of metre or rhythm, too, Plato was guided by similar considerations. He thought that different rhythms expressed different moral states—meanness, insolence, fury or courage. Metres which are simple and avoid complexity are the "expressions of a courageous and harmonious life," while the complex ones are the exponents of a jarring soul. "Beauty of style and harmony and good rhythm dependon the true simplicity of a rightly and nobly ordered mind and character." "And ugliness and discord and in-

Simplicity of rhythm is both the cause and the effect of harmony in the soul.

harmonious motion are nearly allied to ill words and ill nature, as grace and harmony are the twin sisters of goodness and virtue and bear their likeness."³

¹ Republic, Bk. II.

² Republic, Bk. III.

³ Republic, Bk. III

Simplicity of rhythm, is not only the exponent of a previously existing harmony in the soul, it is also the generative cause of it, just as complexity and want of order in the rhythm or in the musical note produce in the mind of the audience a feeling of discord or jar. For young men, therefore, whose character is not yet shaped, whose temperament has not yet received any distinct stamp, the healthy influence of poetry and of rhythm is incalculable. "Musical training is

Hence the importance of good musical training and of good poetry for young minds.

a more potent instrument than any other, because rhythm and harmony find their way into the inward places of the soul, on which they mightily fasten, imparting and making the soul of him who is rightly 'educated' graceful, or of him who is ill-educated, ungraceful."¹

The basis of Plato's views on rhythm in poetry lies in his own Psychology and in his predilection for the theory of Harmony as developed by the Pythagoreans. In the Republic as well as in the Phædrus the soul is represented as the battle-ground of three elements—

Plato's views determined by his Psychology and his Pythagorean predilections.

Reason, Appetite and Passion. Moral excellence consists in a calm, unperturbed condition of the soul consequent on a balance of these three principles,

and all types of moral deformity result from the predominance of the evil elements causing turmoil and discord. The one is Platonic Temperance, Justice or Courage and the other Intemperance, Injustice or Cowardice. The former is accordingly described by Plato as harmony and the latter as discord or jar. The training necessary for producing this harmony in the mind, which is meant by temperance and Justice, is music.² Jowett says, "There is something

¹ Republic, Bk. III.

² Republic, Bk. II.

Pythagorean in Plato's veneration for harmony," and the truth of this remark is amply borne out by the use to which Plato puts music and the connection he tries to establish between music and what he calls harmony in the human soul. The word harmony in the mouth of the Pythagoreans had always the suggestion of musical investigations. They made experiments with stringlengths and found out their arithmetical relations in consequence of which musical melody arose out of jarring notes. Melody or Music, therefore, was to them harmony

According to the Pythagoreans symphony is based on a reconciliation of opposites or harmony—a principle based on their musical investigations.

because its nature was numerically determinable, and according to the Pythagoreans, number itself stood for harmony and order, and disorder meant a state of things which was not amenable to calculation according to the theory of numbers. "They declared that the odd and the even (numbers) are respectively identical with the limited and the unlimited. As all numbers are composed of the even and the odd, all things also combine in themselves fundamental antitheses, and specially that of the limited and the unlimited. To this Heracleitan fundamental principle there is bound this logical consequence that everything is the reconciliation of opposites or a harmony." The musical sound which they assumed to arise from the revolution of the spheres was called by them "Harmony of the spheres." It is this conception of reconciliation of the opposites with its necessary consequence of order and beauty that lies embedded in the Platonic doctrine of harmony, and Plato applies to his analysis of the soul, the

Plato applies the physical and mathematical conclusions of the Pythagoreans to his study of the human soul

results of the Pythagoreans' musical investigations; for appetite, passion and reason are violent antagonists of one another engaged in a continuous warfare.

¹ Windelband's History of Ancient Philosophy, p. 96.

It is the resultant state of order which is named Harmony by Plato. Now the Pythagoreans only described melody or music as harmony (as in "the Harmony of the spheres"), but Plato, as noted above, looked upon Music as capable of producing harmony in disorder as an external agency. Plato's opinion may be paralleled by the theory of Medical science that sweet sounds soothe disordered brains and soft notes bring repose to agitated nerves. In 'King Lear,' the doctor prescribes this treatment for the frantic king. Plato seems to believe that the notes of music enter the soul and there regulate the motives and feelings (which Plato conceives in terms of matter) by imparting to them

and wants to produce harmony in the soul by means of musical harmony (to be injected into the ear).

their own order, symmetry and proportion. The idea is a little uncommon.

It implies the control of immaterial entities with such physical objects as

sound-waves which can only strike the drum of the ear. Plato thus describes the musical training of boys:—"When they (teachers) have taught him the use of the lyre, they introduce him to the poems of other excellent poets who are the lyric poets; and these they set to music, and make their harmonies and rhythms quite familiar to children's souls, in order that they may learn to be more gentle and harmonious and rhythmical." The actual process of tempering the soul is also indicated:—"When a man allows music to play upon him and to pour into his soul through the funnel of his ears those sweet and soft and melancholy airs of which we were just now speaking, and his whole life is passed in warbling and the delights of song; in the first stage of the process the passion or spirit which is in him is tempered like iron, and made useful, instead of brittle and useless."¹ The same idea occurs in the Laws.²

¹ Republic, Bk. III

² Laws, VII, 802

The power of music as conceived here is similar to that attributed to St. Cecilia's "vocal breath," and Dryden expresses the idea admirably in his "Song for St. Cecilia's Day," where the creation of the cosmos is represented as proceeding to the tune of Heavenly Music.

Plato's theory followed by Dryden

"Where nature underneath a heap
Of jarring atoms lay
And could not heave her head,
The tuneful voice was heard from high
Arise, ye more than dead!
Then cold and hot and moist and dry
In order to their station leap,
And Music's power obey."

It is this Platonic conception of music and poetry which we find scattered in Spenser, for Spenser has not dealt with the topic at length anywhere as he has handled the Platonic theories of Love in his Hymns.

and by Spenser.

In the October Eclogue of the Shepherds Calender, Cuddie laments the lot of poets and depreciates their art as but feeding the fancy of the youth and pandering to their giddy taste. But Pierce replies in a higher strain, saying that the poet teaches the youth and controls their wildness.

"O! what an honor is it, to *restraine*
The *lust of lawlesse* youth with good advice
Or pricke them forth with pleasaunce of thy vaine,
Whereto thou list their trayned willes entice."

Again, he thus describes the effect of Cuddie's song:—

"Soone as thou gynst to sette thy *notes* in frame,
O! how the rurall routes to thee doe cleave!
Seemeth thou dost their *soule of sence bereare*."

The meaning is that Music promotes harmony and temperance in the soul. If there were any doubt as to the

exact import of these lines and the actual source of their inspiration, it has been set at rest by the glosse of E. K. In explaining the words "restraine the lust of lawlesse youth with good advice," E. K. refers to the source of the idea underlying them and says, "This place seemeth to conspyre with Plato, who in his first booke de Legibus sayth, that the first invention of poetry was of very vertuous intent. For at what time an infinite number of youth usually came to theyr great solemne feasts called Panegyrica, which they used every five yeare to hold, some learned man, being more hable then the rest for speciall gyfts of wytte and Musicke would take upon him to sing fine verses to the people in prayse either of virtue or of victory. At whose wonderfull gyft *al men being astonied and as it were ravished with delight* thinking that he was inspired from above, called him *vatem*." On the lines beginning with the words "sence bereave," E. K. comments as follows;—"What the secret working of Musick is in the myndes of men, as well appeareth hereby, that some of the auncient Philosophers, and those the moste wise, as *Plato and Pythagoras, held for opinion, that the mynd was made of a certaine harmonie and musicall nombers*, for the great compassion, and likenes of affection in thone and in the other, as also by that memorable history of Alexander." Then, after stating the effect of different notes of music on Alexander, (also described in Dryden's *Alexander's Feast*) he continues, "Wherefore Plato and Aristotle forbid the Arcadian Melodie from children and youth. For that being altogether on the fyft and vii tone, it is of great force to molifie and quench the kindly courage which useth to burne in yong brests. So that it is not incredible which the poet here sayth, that Musick can bereave the soule of sence." The *same idea* occurs in the Teares of the Muses. Erato or the Muse of Erotic Poetry laments that she has

been put out of her function by verses that kindle disorder in the soul and fill it with wild lewdness instead of with true love.

“ For I that rule in *measure moderate*
The tempest of that stormy passion,
 And use to paint in rimes the troublous state
 Of Lovers life in likest fashion,
 Am put from practice of my kindlie skill,
 Banisht by those that *Love with leawdnes fill.*”

According to the theory of Plato true love would be possible only in a well-balanced soul.

According to Plato true beauty, the essence of beauty or the beauty of God is visible to the human souls in the other world in proportion as they have achieved this balance or harmony. It is fully visible only to the Gods. The Phaedrus gives an account how the souls' chariots follow the Gods along the vault of Heaven and how the two unruly steeds disobey the Charioteer and cause the downfall of the human souls (*i.e.*, chariots containing them) just after they had a momentary glimpse of “the vast sea of Beauty.” These souls come to the earth clothed in different bodies but still they have a dim recollection of their glorious vision. Plato says “The soul which has seen most of truth shall come to the birth as a philosopher, or artist, or musician, or lover; that which has seen truth in the second degree shall be a righteous king or warrior or lord; the soul which is of the third class shall be a politician, or economist, or trader—all these are states of probation, in which he who lives righteously improves, and he who lives unrighteously deteriorates his lot” (Phaedrus). All these men do not retain the recollection of the vision equally well—to most of them it is very dim, and to the philosopher only it is fresh and clear. Hence the philosopher who is always

rapt in contemplation is represented by Plato as a lover enraptured with the beauty on which his soul loves to dwell. "He is always, according to the measure of his abilities, clinging in recollection to those things in which God abides, and in beholding which He is what he is." "He is like a bird fluttering and looking upward and careless of the world below." (Phaedrus.) Whoever has seen Beauty in the other world and recollects and tries to attain to it, is a lover and the philosopher is the most fervent lover, according to Plato. By the philosopher Plato means also the poet, and the philosopher's quest of truth and the poet's worship of beauty both receive their stimulus from love. Poetry therefore is

Poet is a lover of the ideal spiritual beauty and not of sensible beauty. This Platonic teaching found in Spenser

inspired by love. It is love that raises the poet on its golden wings high above the gross and the earthly and gives him a vision of the "blessed mysteries" and of the realm of ethereal beauty of which he sings. Spenser has this conception of the poet throughout his poems. Loose versifiers are not poets. "The rakehell rout of English rhymers" of Gosson are not poets, wanton love does not help the production of poetry, wildness and a life of sensual pleasure are alien to its true spirit. It is the life of rational pursuits, the life of culture or, in the Platonic imagery, it is love that favours the growth of true poetry. In the opening lines to each of the four Hymns, Spenser invokes love to help on his song. In the "Hymne of Heavenly Love" the beginning is this:—

"Love, lift me up upon thy golden wings,
From this base world unto thy heavens hight,
Where I may see those admirable things
Which there thou workest by thy sovaine might
Farre above feeble reach of earthy sight,
That I thereof an heavenly Hymne may sing
Unto the God of Love, high heavens King."

In the Shepheards Calender Pierce laments that there is no reward for poets even if they celebrate the glory of princes and noblemen in their poems, and it is better for them to shun earthly themes and take up the divine ones. Cuddie replies that Colin would be fitter than he to do justice to such a subject were he not hopelessly in love. But Pierce remarks :—

“ Ah, fon ! for love *does teach him climbe so hie,*
 And lyftes him up *out of the loathsome myre :*
 Such immortal mirrhor, as he doth admyre,
 Would rayse ones mynd above the starry skie
 And cause a caytive corage to aspire ;
 For lofty love doth loath a lowly eye.

(October Eclogue—l. 91-96.)

The other view of Poetry which is the view of the many and which is responsible for the multiplication of literary vermin and rhymsters, is that poetry is fed on pleasure, and unholy mirth, fashion and folly. Cuddie is the exponent of this theory.

who rejects the opposite view that license fosters the production of poetry.

“ The vaunted verse a vacant head demaundes,
 Ne wont with crabbed care the Muses dwell :
 Whoever casts to compasse weighty prise,
 And thinkes to throwe out thondering words of threate,
 Let powre in lavish cups and thriftie bitts of meate,
 For Bacchus fruite is frend to Phoebus wise ;
 And, when with Wine the braine begins to waste,
 The numbers flowe as fast as spring doth ryse.”

(October Eclogue.)

But in the Teares of the Muses, Erato states that the source of Poetry lies in Love—pure love that has its birth-place in the Almighty's bosom but which is unintelligible to the so-called poets.

“ Love wont to be *school master of my skill,*
 And the *devicefull matter of my song ;*

Sweete love devoyed of villanie or ill,
 But pure and spotless, *as at first he sprong*
Out of the Almightyes bosome, where he nests ;
 From thence infused into mortall brests.
Such high conceipt of celestiall fire,
 The base-borne brood of blindnes cannot gesse
 Ne dare their dunghill thoughts aspire
 Unto so loftie pitch of perfectnesse
 But rime at riot and doo rage in love ;
 Yet little wote what doth thereto behove."

It will be seen that Spenser has followed Plato's idea that poetry is an inspiration and not simply an art, along with his theory that love is at the root of all poetry. In fact the former idea is implied in the latter. If it is true that only the lover can sing nobly and that love stimulates the production of poetry, it follows as a consequence that there is little of human agency in literary creation. It is the importunate desire which furnishes the inspiration, and man is but a machine to which force is supplied from outside, and over this man has no control. Plato deals with the topic at length in *Ion* and says, "All good poets, epic as well as lyric, compose their beautiful poems not as works of art, but because they are inspired and possessed."¹ This inspiration defies rational ana-

Plato says in the *Ion* that poetry is an inspiration and not simply an art.

lysis and is inexplicable according to the ordinary laws of psychology. "As the Corybantian revellers when they dance are not in their right mind, so the lyric poets are not in their right mind when they are composing their beautiful strains : but when falling under the power of music and metre they are inspired and possessed."¹ Plato tries to define the nature of this inspiration more accurately by calling it madness ; and in the *Phaedrus* he puts poetic fervour in one of the categories

¹ *Ion*.

of madness. "There is a third kind of madness, which is a possession of the Muses; this enters into a delicate and virgin soul, and there inspiring frenzy, awakens lyric and all other numbers.....But he who not being inspired and having no touch of madness in his soul comes to the door and thinks that he will get into the temple by the help of art,—he I say, and his poetry are not admitted."¹ Developing the idea and giving it a poetic garb Plato says that (this madness or) inspiration comes from the Muses. He proceeds further and says it is traceable to God Himself. "They (poets) are simply inspired to utter that to which the *Muse impels them, and that only.....God takes away the minds of poets*, and uses them as his ministers." (Ion.) The October Eclogue of the Shepherds Calender embodies these reflections of Plato. In the argument Spenser describes the nature of Poetry almost exactly in the words of Plato—"no arte but a *divine gift and heavenly instinct* not to be gotten by laboure and learning but adorned with both; and poured into the wit by a *certain Enthousiasmos and Celestiall inspiration*." Again, the prose translation of Cuddie's Embleme given at the foot of the

This view is adopted by Spenser in the Shepherd's Calender, and by E. K. in his Glosse.

Eclogue stands thus: "Hereby is meant, as also in the whole course of this Æglogue, that Poetry is a *divine instinct, and unnatural rage, passing the reach of common reason*." This is a clear indication of the ideas underlying this poem. Besides this there are numerous hints in the body of the Æclogue as to Spenser's views on Poetic inspiration. Poetry is spoken of as "streams of flowing wittes," "buddes of Poesie," and as "shooting" and "springing," the suggestion being the spontaneity of its growth. There is nothing implying

¹ Phaedrus.

that the Art of Poetry has to be mastered only with severe patience, and after protracted self-training, that every poet possesses through a period of severe self-criticism. Even Cuddie who is in this *Æglogue* the exponent of the current and popular theory of poetry, viz., that poets can afford to live a life of low and vulgar pleasure, admits its spontaneous growth.

“.....When with wine the braine begins to sweate,
The numbers flowe as fast as *spring doth ryse*.”

Again,

“Thou Kenst not, Percie, howe *the ryme should rage*,
O ! if my temples were distained with wine,
And girt in girlonds of wild yvie twine,
How could I reare the Muse on stately stage,
And teache her tread aloft in buskin fine,
With quaint Bellona in her equipage !”

The words “numbers flowe as fast as *spring doth ryse*” clearly indicate the rapid composition of inspired poets. This is also the underlying idea in the next few lines on which E. K. comments thus :—“ he seemeth here to be ravished with a *Poetical furie*. For (if one rightly mark) the numbers rise so ful, and the verse groweth so big that it seemeth he forget the meannesse of Shephard’s state and stile.” The other imagery of Plato symbolising the inspiration of poets, viz., that God or the heavenly Muse bestows the power of song on poets, is also to be found in the following lines of Spenser :—

“ O pierless Poesye ! where is then thy place ?
If nor in Princes pallace thou doe sitt,
(And yet is Princes pallace the most fitt,)
Ne brest of baser birth doth thee embrace,
Then make thee winges of thine aspyring wit,
And, whence thou camst, *flye back to heaven apace*.”

The hint contained in these lines is that there is no fit theme on earth for the God-given power of song and no reward for its achievements, and so the poet would be well advised to sing of the glory of God, the source of his inspiration.

Spenser follows in the footsteps of Plato in exercising a censorship on Poetry. Plato devotes two books of the Republic to determining the form of this censorship.

Following Plato, Spenser wants some restriction on the scope of poetry.

One form of it consists of a restriction on the choice of subjects to be handled in Literature. All stories about the vices of the gods and their moral deformity were proscribed, and poets in the ideal Republic were to sing of virtue and heroic deeds only. Fiction according to Plato was a lie, and it could not be permitted to flourish without restriction. Stories that represented the gods to be possessed of magic powers, or painted overwhelming grief or caused roars of laughter or painted in horrid colours the pictures of the nether world were prohibited. "We must remain firm in our conviction that *hymns to the gods and praises of famous men* are the only poetry which ought to be admitted to our state."¹ "Anything he (the youngman) receives into his mind at that age is likely to become indelible and unalterable; and therefore it is most important that the tales which the young first hear should be models of *virtuous thoughts*."² Spenser holds the same opinion regarding the subject-matter of Poetry. He himself has been called "the sage poet," and he has definitely expressed in clear and unambiguous language the high moral purpose which ought to guide a poet. He had a very strong opinion against the spirit of contemporary poetry, and in the Tears of the Muses

¹ Republic, Bk. X.

² Republic, Bk. II.

he expresses his abhorrence of the productions of his age which are characterised as :—

“ Heepes of huge wordes uphoorded hideously,
With Horrid sound though having little sence ”

Praise of virtue is looked upon as one of the legitimate themes of Poetry. In the Mother Hubberds Tale, we have the following lines :—

Praise of virtue.

“ Ah for shame,
Let not sweet Poets praise, whose only pride
Is virtue to advance, and vice deride,
Ne with the works of losels wit defamed¹
Ne let such verses Poetrie be named ”.

In the Teares of the Muses Calliope declares :—

“—*the nurse of vertue* I am hight,
And golden Trumpet of eternitie.”

Spenser's poetic creed also includes the celebration of the feats of ' heroes ' or famous men (as Plato has it). He is impressed like Plato with the necessity of “adorning the myriad actions of ancient heroes for the instruction of posterity.” Calliope laments that epic poetry which blazoned forth the deeds of brave men flourishes no more, because the brave are given to sloth and vice.

Celebration of
heroic deeds.

“ For they to whom I used to applie
The faithful service of my learned skill,
The goodly offspring of Joves progenie,
That wont the world with fauous acts to fill
Whose living praises in heroick style,
It is my chiefe profession to compyle ;
They, all corrupted through the rust time
That doth all fairest things on earth deface,
Have both *desire of worthie deeds forlorne,*
And name of learning utterly do scorne.”

(Teares of the Muses.)

¹ Phædrus,

The reasons for chronicling the actions of heroes in verse are also given by Spenser.

“ Who would ever care to doo brave deed,
Or strive in vertue others to excell,
If none should yield him his deserved meed,
Due praise, that is the spur of dooing well ?
For if good were not praised more than ill,
None would choose goodness of his own freewill.”

(Teares of the Muses)

The sonnets “addressed by the author of the Faerie Queene to various noblemen” in commending his poem to their patronage also give Spenser’s ideas regarding the advisability of enshrining heroic deeds in poetry. The Sonnet to the Earl of Northumberland has these lines :—

“ The Sacred Muses have made alwaies clame
To be the Nourses of nobility,
And Registres of everlasting fame
To all that armes professe and chevalry.”

“ Then, by like right the noble Progeny,
Which them succeed in fame and worth, are tyde
T’ embrace the service of sweete Poetry,
By whose *endeavours they are glorified.*”

The Sonnets to Lord Ch. Howard and Sir John Norris, Lord President of Munster contain similar ideas.

“ The hymns to the God ” which constitute another class of licensed poetry in Plato’s Republic do not appear

And glorification of God are according to Plato and Spenser the proper subject matter of poetry.

in Spenser in exactly the same form in which Plato probably would have liked to see them. Spenser does not sing peans of praise to the mythological gods of Greece except Cupid and Venus to whose glorification the first and second hymns are respectively devoted. Though these are in the ordinary amorous vein, they have preserved the form and externals of hymnic composition. Spenser, however, repented the amorous composition

of the 'greener times' of his youth and, by way of retraction of what he considered to be objectionable verses, produced the two other poems which more nearly approach the spirit of devotional poetry or hymn. In them he celebrated the praise not of the Greek gods but of the Deity, the "High Heaven's King" and

—"His truth, His love, His wisdom and His blis,
His grace, his doome, his mercy and his might
By which he lends us of himselfe a sight."

It may also be urged that he used the word 'hymn' in the titles of his four poems advisedly. The last two hymns have all the seriousness and solemnity of the litany and the feeling of devotion which Plato surely wanted in his 'Hymns to the gods.'

CHAPTER III.

BLENDING OF PLATO AND ARISTOTLE,—TEMPERANCE

Critics look upon Spenser's conception and treatment of the virtue of Temperance as strictly Aristotelian¹ and the second book of the *Fairie Queene* as based on the chapters on self-control in the *Nicomachean Ethics*. There can be no doubt about Spenser's dependence on Aristotle for his conception of this virtue, but this criticism overlooks the part played by Plato's philosophy in Book II.

It is certain that there has been a curious blending of Plato and Aristotle in this book. Spenser did not read

Spenser's conception of Temperance is a blend of Platonic and Aristotelian doctrines.

Aristotle and Plato critically, since the times were not yet ripe for such study and evidently his memory could not keep the doctrines of the one separate from those of the other. In writing his poem he was not so much concerned with the accurate presentation of philosophic thought as with his immediate purpose. Hence the Aristotelian mean and the Platonic harmony, Aristotle's classification of virtues and Plato's theory of their unity got mixed up.

It is clear that the structure of the poem is determined by Aristotle's classification of the objects of self-control. The episodes present in a concrete form the different kinds of intemperance as conceived by Aristotle. In Book III, ch. XIII, of his *Ethics* Aristotle says, "The habits of perfected self-mastery and entire absence of

¹ *Mod. Phil.*, Vol. XVI, p. 251.

self-control have for their object-matter such pleasure as brutes also share in.....they are touch and taste." Latterly Aristotle merges taste in touch and regards the latter alone as the object of Temperance. We further find in Aristotle that anger and things like money, gain and honour are also regarded as objects of self-control, though they are to be called so only by analogy. Spenser devises Guyon's adventures in accordance with this classification of Aristotle. His first and greatest enemy

Structure of the poem:
second book of the
Fairy Queen deter-
mined by Aristotle's
classification of virtues
covered by Tem-
perance.

is Acrasia whom he undertakes to subdue in the very first canto of the poem. Furor and Pyrochles represent anger and Mammon wealth. The three sisters Elissa, Medina and Perissa together with the lovers of the eldest and of the youngest may also be taken to illustrate Aristotle's doctrine of the Extremes and of the mean. At any rate Spenser says in the little stanza prefacing the Second Canto that he puts this interpretation on the story of the three sisters. But Spenser was attracted more by the profoundness of Plato's thought than by the subtle analytics of Aristotle, and beneath these palpable Aristotelian theories lies the undercurrent of Platonism. Platonism is the informing spirit of the poem—it enters into all

But the characters of
the personæ are im-
bued with Platonic
ideas.

the basic conceptions of the characters and their inner psychology. The characters of Pyrochles, Cymochles and Guyon as presented by Spenser breathe the spirit of Platonic philosophy. The house of Alma as depicted in Canto IX, has no other object than to give in a concrete form Plato's theory of moral government.

Aristotle has divided vice and virtue into separate sub-classes. His analysis has proceeded further and enquired into the subject-matter of each virtue and of each vice, the popular opinions concerning them, the analogies

formed on them and so forth. Aristotle's ideas are eminently practical and easy to comprehend, and as such were very acceptable to later generations, the scholastics of the Middle Ages who superimposed their own subtle distinctions on them. Plato's contemplative mood has no interest for details and he tries to go beyond the separate virtues and vice as manifested in action and disposition and to find out their one common cause or the source of them all in the soul. It is the inner man and the "inner life" which is the subject of Plato's enquiry. The one thing on which Plato insists is the unity of moral life and the unity of virtue. This is the teaching which Plato seeks to inculcate in more than one of his Dialogues. The unity of virtue is the subject-matter of Protagoras. It is also the teaching of the Republic. Socrates asks, "Virtue is the health and beauty and well-being of the soul, and vice the disease and weakness and deformity of the same?"

'True'

"The argument seems to have reached a height from which, as from some 'tower of speculation, a man may look down and see that *virtue is one*, but that the forms of vice are innumerable."¹


The Republic records Plato's enquiry about the virtue of man—which includes according to his doctrine of the unity of Virtue, Temperance, Courage, Justice and Wisdom. Plato maintains that there is a close analogy between virtue in man and virtue in the state and it is well-known how from an examination of the latter he determines

The Republic defines Temperance as a harmony of moral principles and identifies it with justice.

what constitutes healthy moral life in man. Plato discovers in man's inner being three principles corresponding to the three different classes of citizens in the state—the rulers, (in Plato's language "guardians")

¹ Republic.

the soldiers and the labouring classes. These principles are Reason the function of which is equivalent to that of the guardians in the state, Passion or Anger which in its fury and violence resembles the warrior class in the state and Appetite which seeks material comfort and is equivalent to the productive classes or labourers. When the two other classes do their own duties properly under the guidance of the guardians, the state enjoys perfect health resulting in the greatest happiness of its members. Timocracy, Democracy or Tyranny ensues as one of these subordinate classes or the other gets the better of the guardians and assumes functions not its own. Thus the strength and happiness of the state depend on a balance of different and conflicting classes of its citizens. Similarly, so long as the two principles in the soul do their respective duties under the guidance and direction of Reason, there is peace and harmony in the soul. This is the state of Temperance. Temperance is not the virtue of any particular part or principle of the soul, but it is the result of the agreement among all as to who be their controller and guide. This may also be called the state of Justice in the soul as Justice according to Plato consists in doing one's own duty, and harmony in the soul is possible only when the different principles confine themselves within the strict limits of their own duties and do not overstep them by aggressive encroachments on others' spheres of work. Discord ensues when a subordinate principle—Passion or Appetite—tries to assert its superiority in defiance of Reason. It manifests itself as anger or concupiscence and, as Plato puts it, corresponding to every disease in the state—Timocracy, Oligarchy or Democracy—there is a disease in the soul. Now Plato considers harmony to be the normal condition of the soul and every form of discord to be a disease and a vice. Hence according to Plato



the health or harmony of the soul is the condition precedent to the existence of any virtue in it—in fact he regards this as equivalent to that virtue whose unity he is never weary of emphasising. The just man “sets in order his own inner life, and is his own master and his own law, and at peace with himself, and when he has bound together the three principles within him, which may be compared to the higher, lower, and middle notes of the scale, and the intermediate intervals—when he has bound all these together, and is no longer many but has become one entirely temperate and perfectly adjusted nature, then he proceeds to act, if he has to act, whether in a matter of property, or in the treatment of the body or in some *affair of politics or private business*.”¹ Similarly discord or injustice in the soul is the condition on which the existence of every vice depends,—it is “a meddlesomeness, and interference, and rising up of a part of the soul against the whole” . . . “What is all this confusion and delusion but injustice and intemperance and cowardice and ignorance and every form of vice?”²

This comprehensive idea so characteristically Hellenic had a strong hold on Plato's mind and we find a repetition of it, in a slightly different form, in the *Phaedrus*. The tripartite division of the soul and the conception of balance are discernible in the figure of the two winged horses and a charioteer driving them. One of the horses is good and the other bad, the good horse being Passion (or Anger) which more often is a help to Reason than a hindrance, which the bad horse or Appetite usually is. When perfectly balanced or fully winged the chariot

¹ The *Phaedrus* repeats the theory of the *Symposium*.

of the soul soars upwards and sees Justice, Knowledge and Absolute

¹ Republic, Bk. IV.

² Republic, Bk. III.

Beauty. But when the steeds are disobedient, the poise is disturbed and the horses tread on one another and fall down losing their wings. Here we find that the vision of the Reality depends on the steeds' obedience to the charioteer, which in plain language means that every kind of virtue issues out of the harmony in the soul.

The Aristotelian mean seems to be an arbitrary standard when compared with the Platonic conception of temperance or harmony. Spenser draws on the Platonic conception in creating characters as already stated, and also in his reflections. The character of Pyrochles as presented by Spenser shews clearly the poet's Platonic ideas. Pyrochles represents the violence of anger but the poet emphasises more the turmoil in his soul, his inward "burning" than the manifestation of his disposition in overt action. Pyrochles' violent temperament is announced by his servant Atin. When he appears on the scene, he commences the fight without even stopping to greet Guyon. He fights rashly and is defeated. Guyon then tells him not to mind the defeat in this fight for a more terrible fight is going on in his soul.

Pyrochles is the reverse of Platonic temperance—there is a turmoil in his soul, with the predominance of anger

"Fly O Pyrochles ! fly the dreadful warre
That in thy selfe thy lesser partes do move :
Outrageous *anger*, and woe-working *jarre*,
.
Direfull *impatience*, and hart-murdering love:
Those, those thy foes, those warriours far remove,
Which thee to endlesse bale captived lead."

(C. V—16).

In Plato the inwardness of Temperance or Justice and the harmony which it implies are thus spoken of:—
"Justice is such as we were describing, being concerned not with the outward man, but with the inward which is

the true self and concernment of man ; for the just man does not permit the *several elements within him to interfere with one another*. . . . he sets in order his own inner life, and is his own master and his own law, and at peace with himself."¹ Again, "Must not injustice be a *strife which arises among the 'three principles'*—a meddlesomeness and interference?" Spenser begins the canto where Pyrochles appears for the first time with these lines :—

"Whoever doth to temperance apply
His steadfast life, and all his actions frame,
'Trust me, shal find no greater enemy
Then stubborne *perturbation* to the same ;
To which right well the wise do give that name,
'For it the goodly peace of staied mindes
Does *overthrow*, and troublous warre proclame."

(C. V—I.)

Anger, thus, is a disturbance in the soul which overthrows the balance of the mind. That the intemperance of Pyrochles is an inward discord in the soul, is also proved by the exclamations of the giant warrior when he throws himself into the river to quench his burning sensation :—

"I burne, I burne, I burne,
O ! how I burne with implacable fyre ;
Yet nought can quench mine *inly flaming syde*."

(C. VI—44)

"Harrow ! the flames which me consume, (said hee)
Ne can be quencht, *within my secred bowelles bee*."

(C. VI—49)

Though Platonism has a place in the conception of Pyrochles' character, Aristotle's ideas are not absent. Almost every important character in Book II is based on

¹ Republic. Bk. IV.

a blending of Platonic and Aristotelian ideas. Knowledge is an essential part of courage according to the teaching both of Plato and Aristotle, and want of knowledge, discrimination and foresight is, as already seen, glaring in the character both of Pyrochles and Cymochles. Besides this, the vice of excess as contrasted with the mean is clearly noticeable in Pyrochles' character, but Aristotelian courage is a mean between Foolhardiness and Cowardice. Braggado-

But Aristotle's ideas on foolhardiness also enter into the conception of Pyrochles' character

chio stands for the latter extreme, while the two 'Paynim brethren' represent the former.¹ Pyrochles fears nothing while Braggadochio is afraid even of a woman.

But according to Aristotle "He is brave who withstands and fears, and is bold, in respect of right objects, from a right motive, in right manner, and at right times."² Again "Nobleness is the motive from which the Brave man withstands things fearful." Guyon's motive in undertaking his adventures is the destruction of the Bower of Bliss. This is a worthy motive; but Pyrochles has no proper motive for seeking Occasion.

"All in blood and spoile is his *delight*."

As Pyrochles is marked by anger, so Mordant is characterised by sensuality. His sensuality too is represented by Spenser as an inward discord. The poet's reflection on the dead body of the knight is as follows:—

"When *raging passion with fierce tyranny*
Robs reason of her dew regallite,
 And makes it servaunt to her basest part,
 The strong it weakens with infirmitie."

(C. I—52)

Here 'passion' means appetite, and sensuality is the disturbance of the soul's harmony caused by the ascendancy

¹ See M. Phil Vol. XVI. 246-253.

² Ethics, Bk. III, ch. X.

of concupiscence over reason. We have the following in Plato's Republic corresponding to these lines of Spenser. "Over this (concupiscent part of the soul) they

Discord in Mordant's soul expressed in his sensuality—a Platonic interpretation of his character.

(music and gymnastics) will keep guard, lest, waxing great and strong with the fulness of bodily pleasures, as they are termed, the concupiscent soul, no longer

confined to her own sphere, should attempt to enslave and rule those who are not her natural-born subjects (Reason), and overturn the whole life of man." The change effected in Mordant by sensuality affects his inner life and is thus described by his wife Amavia:—

"So transformed from his former skill
That me he knew not, nether his owne ill."

(C. II—54)

Spenser also interprets this tragedy in Aristotle's manner. Temperance means following the golden mean according to Aristotle, and Mordant ought to have pursued a *via media* between total abstinence and excess.

Spenser also interprets his character in the manner of Aristotle.

While in the stanza quoted above a Platonic representation of the vice of the knight is given, viz., that it is a struggle in the soul in which concupiscence has the better of reason, in another stanza Spenser says in the language of Aristotle:—

"Temperaunce with golden squire
Betwixt them both can *measure out a meane* ;
Nether to melt in pleasures whotte desyre,
Nor frye in heartlesse grieve and dolefull tene :"

Plato speaks of music and gymnastics as the means of promoting harmony in the moral life of man,—music having the effect of soothing down animal passion and gymnastics counteracting the tendency to too much softness and thoughtfulness produced by the mere

exercise of the rational faculty. Thus the remedy for a moral disease is internal. The symphony of music restores the balance of the soul when disturbed and consolidates it if undisturbed. Though gymnastics is an exercise of the limbs, yet its stimulating effect on the soul alone is taken into consideration by Plato and its recommendation is based on his recognition of the truth that the health of the soul depends on a balance of its three elements—reason, passion, and appetite. When the intemperance of Mordant in Acrasia's Bower had changed his soul by the subversion of reason and the ascendancy of appetite, Amavia for a time brought him back to his normal condition by a wise direction of his inner life. (This corresponds to the effect of music as defined by Plato.) Amavia says:—

“Through wise *handling* and *faire governance*
I him recured to a better will,
Purged from drugs of fowle intemperance.”

Aristotle also deals with the change produced by intemperance. But while Plato looks upon the change as affecting the essence of the soul, Aristotle regards it as something affecting the nervous system. “It is clear then that we must regard incontinent people as being in much the same condition as people who are asleep or mad or intoxicated.” As for the restoration of such incontinent people to their original state, he says, “If it be asked how the incontinent person is delivered from ignorance and restored to knowledge, it may be answered, that the process is the same as in the case of one who is intoxicated or asleep; it is not peculiar to the condition of incontinence, and the proper authorities upon it are the physiologists.”¹ The difference between Plato and Aristotle in their methods of

¹ *Ethics*, Bk. VII, Ch. V.

treatment of persons suffering from moral disorder shows the difference of their ideas about the disease itself.

Difference between
Aristotle's and Plato's
theories of intemper-
ance.

According to Plato immorality is an internal disease, a disturbance of the harmony of the soul, while according to Aristotle it is a mere external thing, a nervous disorder at the most.

The castle of Alma is a distinct allegory of the Platonic doctrines of harmony and discord in the soul. Alma is the Rational Soul and the smooth working of her castle secured through the obedience of her servants symbolises the Platonic harmony, and the servants themselves are the various faculties of man.

"In a body which doth freely yeeld
His partes to reasons rule obedient,
And letteth her that ought the Scepter weeld,
All happy peace and goodly government
Is setled there in sure establishment."

(C. XI.-2)

This may be paralleled by the following passage from the Republic:—"Most truly then may we deem Temperance to be the agreement of the naturally superior and inferior as to the right rule of either both in state and the individual. And would you not say that he is temperate who has these same elements in friendly harmony, in whom the one ruling principle of reason and the two subject ones of spirit and desire are equally agreed that reason ought to rule, and do not rebel?"¹ It may be noticed here that Spenser does not always follow Plato's threefold division of the soul strictly. The number of those who work under Alma and obey her orders is not mentioned but certainly it is not limited to three only.

The House of Alma
is also an allegory of
Plato's theory.

¹ Republic, Bk. IV.

The description of the siege of the castle contains much foreign element, of the twelve troops employed the seven stationed at the gate imply the seven deadly sins of the scholastics and the number of troops set against the five bulworks has been suggested by the five Senses. With all this mediæval imagery the underlying Platonic idea of struggle and discord is clearly discernible, though here the discord is represented as due to an external agency. Spenser says :—

“ What warre so cruel, or what siege so sore,
As that which strong affections doe apply
Against the furte of reason ever more
To bring the sowle into captivity ?”
(C. XI. I.)

Again,

“ Of all God’s workes which doe this worlde adorne,
There is no one more faire and excellent
Then is man’s body, both for powre and forme,
Whiles it is kept in sober government ;
But none then it more fowle and indecent,
Distempred through misrule and passions lace.”
(C. IX. I.)

According to Plato’s theory, temperance precedes all virtues in man and courage does not exist apart from temperance. In Protagoras, the well-known sophist affirms that courage and wisdom are different, but Socrates has no difficulty in refuting him and proving that “those who are confident without knowledge are really not courageous but mad.” The same view is expressed in the Republic where Courage is shewed to depend on Temperance (which according to Plato would be wisdom). Spenser shares Plato’s view about the relation between Courage and Temperance (or Wisdom). Furor is not represented as courageous, though he is a violent fighter, because he has no

Courage in Plato is identical with Wisdom and Temperance and includes discretion as in Aristotle

discernment of his opponent's strength and no skill ;—in other words he has not that Temperance which wisdom gives.

“ And sure he was a man of mickle might,
Had he had governaunce it well to guyde ;

And oft himselve he chaunst to hurt unwares,
 Whylest reason, *blent through passion*, nought deseryde ;
 But as a blindfold Bull, at random fares,
 And where he hits nought knowes, and whom he hurts
 nought cares.”

(C. IV.—VII.)

Pyrochles is described by his servant as a terrible and blood-thirsty soldier, and Atin asks Guyon to

“ Drad for his derring doe and bloody deed ;
 For all in blood and spoile is his delight.”

He commences his fight with Guyon in a violent manner but the skill of Guyon soon brings him down on his knees begging for his life. He is thus found out to be an abject coward. His brother Cymochles is intemperate in a different way. He is sensual but want of temperance or balance of mind makes him equally violent in battle. Both the brothers are defeated and killed by Arthur who in the Second Book represents the virtue of Temperance. The key-note to the characters of Furor, Pyrochles, and Cymochles is struck in the following passages from Plato :—“ I suppose that you mean to exclude mere uninstructed courage such as that of a wild beast or of a slave—this, in your opinion, is not the courage which the law ordains, and ought to have another name.” Socrates says, “ He (Nicias) he appears to mean that courage is a sort of wisdom.” Nicias says, “ I do not call animals or any other things courageous, which have no fear of dangers, because they are ignorant of

them, but fearless and senseless only....Now I am of opinion that thoughtful courage is a quality possessed by very few, but that rashness and boldness and fearlessness, which has no forethought, are very common qualities possessed by many men."¹

The characters of the three sisters again shew how Aristotelian and Platonic theories are mixed up by Spenser. Most critics look upon them exclusively as an illustration of the theory of the extremes and the mean, the eldest and youngest sisters representing excess and defect respectively, and Medina the mean. Similarly Hudibras the lover of the eldest and Sansloy the lover of the youngest have been interpreted as standing for the two extremes and Guyen for the mean. But excess and defect imply a difference of degree, not of kind, and they mean excess and defect of the same attribute. Yet it is clear from the remarks of the poet himself that Elissa and Perissa stand for two distinct vices—one represents Anger and the other Sensuality.

The episode of the three sisters is based on the theories of both Aristotle and Plato—not on those of any one of them exclusively.—The husbands correspond to their wives in morals and temper.

" Elissa (so the eldest hight) did deeme
Such entertainment base, ne ought would eat,
Ne ought would speake, but evermore did seeme
As discontent for want of merth or meat;
Ne solace could her paramour intreat
Her once to shew, ne court, nor dalliaunce;
But with bent lowering browes, as she would threat,
She scould, and frownd with froward countenance;

.. .. .

But young Perissa was of other mynd,
Full of disport, still laughing, loosely light,
And quite contrary to her sister's kynd;
No measure in her mood, no rule of right,
But poured out in *pleasure and delight*:

¹ Laches.

In *wine and meats* she flowed above the banck,
 And in *excesse* exceeded her owne might;
 In sumptuous *tire* she joyed herselfe to pranck,
 But of her *love too larish*: (little have she thanck?)

Again,

"Fast by ner side did sitt the bold Sansloy,
 Fitt mate for such a mincing mineon,
 Who in her *looseness tooke* exceeding joy.
 Might not be found a francker franion,
 Of her leawd parts to make companion :"

(C. II. 35-37.)

Perissa^a is here described as "quite contrary to her sisters kynd." "Wine and meats," 'pleasure and delight' and "excess" and "love" are the elements in which she lives, moves and has her being. Her lover Sansloy takes part in her "looseness" and "leawd parts." This picture is surely fundamentally different from the previous one in which "lowring browes" 'scolding' and 'frowning' are so clearly marked. Besides this, we find Medina sitting between her two sisters and controlling them—a function ascribed to Reason in Plato and nowhere given to the Mean by Aristotle.

"Betwixt them both the faire Medina sate
 With sober grace and goodly carriage :
 With equall measure she did moderate
 The strong extremities of their outrage.

.....

So kept she them in order, and herselfe in heed."

(Bk. II. C. II. 38.)

It is beyond doubt that these sisters represent the tripartite Division of the Soul in Plato. Medina as Reason controls Appetite and Passion represented by the other two sisters, and so long as her control is effective there is peace and harmony in the house. When the control is wanting or is slackened the two sisters create disorder by inciting their lovers to fight.

The two knights Hudibras and Sansloy represent the same vices as their lady-loves; they do not symbolise excess and defect of the same vice.

- “ He that made love unto the eldest Dame,
 • Was hight Sir Huddibras, an hardy man ;
 Yet not so good of deedes as great of name,
 Which he by many rash adventures wan,
 Since errant armes to sew he first began :
 More *huge in strength then wise in workes* he was,
And reason with foole-hardize overran ;
 (C. II. 17.)

But he that lov'd the youngest was Sansloy ;
 He, that faire Una late *fowle outraged*,
 The most unruly and the boldest boy
 That ever warlike weapons menaged,
 And all to *lawlesse lust* encouraged.”
 (II. 18.)

In Hudibras are to be noticed all the elements which Anger or Passion in Plato comprises. He has encountered many rash adventures but he is not really courageous, “not so good of deedes as great of name,” because courage depends on obedience to Reason while Hudibras's reason is “With fool-hardize over ran.” Sansloy is introduced as the outrager of Una and he is “to lawlesse lust encouraged.” These two knights typifying Anger and Passion rush against Guyon when they see him and the discord is described exactly in the language of Plato

“ A triple war with triple enmity ”
 (C. II. 26.)

Reason controls both Appetite and Passion when they rise up against it, and Guyon keeps at bay both these terrible warriors.

“ Wondrous great prowessse and heroick worth
 He shewed that day, and rare ensample made,
 When *two so mighty warriors he dismade.*”
 (C. II. 25.)

The Platonic analysis of the soul into three distinct principles seems also to have suggested the relation in which the three characters Pyrochles, Cymochles and Arthur stand to one another. Pyrochles has already been shown to represent Passion or Anger according to the Platonic Psychology. Cymochles repre-

Pyrochles, Cymo-
chles and Arthur also
symbolise Plato's tri-
partite division of the
soul.

sents Appetite and his very first appear-
ance in the poem shows his character

—Atin comes to summon him to his brother's help and finds him lying on a bed of lilies in the Bower of Bliss and dallying with a number of damsels. In order to rouse him to activity Atin has to prick him with his sharp-pointed dart.

“for he by kynd
Was given all to *lust and loose living*”

(C. V-28.)

He starts to give succour to his brother but on his way falls a victim to the charms of Phaedria. Arthur in the Second Book represents the same virtue as Guyon, *i.e.*, he is Reason according to Plato's analysis of the soul. Hence Arthur fights with both Pyrochles and Cymochles—Anger and Appetite, and both are killed by him.

The conception of Phaon's character is mainly Aristotelian. Phaon is a victim to angry passions but he feels remorse for his hasty actions. His vengeance seems just at first sight, and according to Aristotle the passionate man seems to follow Reason in a way.¹ Yet the influence of Plato's Ethics is not absent. Phaon is intemperate and Spenser lays special stress on the internal jar produced in him by his passions. The violence of this discord almost drives him mad and is figuratively represented by the

Phaon's character is
more Aristotelian than
Platonic.

¹ Ethics, Bk. VII, Ch. VI. and Miss Winstanley on Aristotle and Spenser in her Edition of the Fairy Queen, Bk. II.

attacks of Furor and Ocpasion on him. Phaon thus describes his mental state :—

“ Betwixt them both they have me doen to dye,
Through wounds, and strokes, and stubborne handeling,
That death were better then *such agony*
As grieve and fury unto me did bring :”

(C. IV-33.)

The Palmer's reprimand to Phaon is a correct diagnosis of his disease and his analysis is strictly Platonic.

“ Most wretched man,
That to affections does the bridle lend !
In their beginning they are weake and wan,
But soone through suff'rance growe to fearefull end :
Whiles they are weake, betimes with them contend ;
For, when they once to perfect strength do grow,
Strong warres *they make, and cruell battry bend*
Gainst fort of Reason, it to overthrow :”

(C. IV-34.)

The inwardness of Phaon's intemperance is further shown by the nature of his enemy Furor. He is not a material being who can be easily killed but represents the fury of the mind or passion which cannot be quelled without re-establishing harmony in the soul.

“ He is not, ah ! he is not such a foe,
As steele can wound, or strength can overthrow.”
(C. IV-10.)

Guyon's character is undoubtedly suggested by Aristotle but Plato's influence too is noticeable in it. Guyon is not only the Aristotelian mean, he represents also the Platonic harmony. He is the mean between the Foolhardiness of Pyrochles and the cowardice of Braggadochio. But his courage is the outcome of a temperate or balanced soul. Knowledge is an important element of courage according to Plato (and also

Guyon's character also is based on Aristotle and on Plato alike.

Aristotle), and Guyon's courage is not mere uninstructed courage like Pyrochles', but depends on skill. Guyon is Aristotelian in that he feels the temptation and yet resists it—this is his moral state in the cave of Mammon and in the island of Phaedria. But Spenser also interprets his character in the manner of Plato as a harmony in the soul. The Redcrosse Knight recognising his enemy to be Guyon¹ says,

“For sith I know your *goodly governaunce*,
Great cause, I weene, you guided, or some uncouth chaunce.”

Here “goodly governaunce” means a balanced and temperate soul. The very first description of the bearing of the Knight of Temperance comprises these lines :

“His carriage was full comely and upright
His countenance demure and *temperate*.”
(C. I-6.)

It is difficult to trace the origin of such literary treatment of the Platonic analysis of the soul. It is doubtful whether Spenser is original in this respect, for Tasso's Jerusalem Delivered has been interpreted by Tasso himself as an allegory based on Plato's Psychology of the soul. This interpretation is embodied in a chapter entitled “Allegory of the poem,” which has been considered to have been a mere afterthought of the poet. But whatever it might be, it must have been appended to the poem itself in its later publications and Spenser must have read the poem in the light of this interpretation. It is not impossible that he should have been impressed with the Platonic interpretation of his poem by Tasso and regarded the Platonic theme as one eminently fit for poetic treatment by

Spenser's possible debt to Tasso in respect of the literary treatment of Plato's tripartite division of the soul.

¹ In Can. I, Bk. II 29.

himself. The following extract from the "Allegory of the poem" would show Tasso's manner of handling the Platonic Ethics and indicate its similarity to Spenser's in Bk. II of the *Faerie Queene*.—"Godfrey who of all the assembly is chosen chieftain stands for *understanding*And of Princes he is chosen captain of this enterprise, because understanding is of God; ...*Love* which maketh Tancredie and the other worthies to doat, and disjoin them from Godfrey, and the *disdain* which enticeth Rinaldo from the enterprise do signify conflict and *rebellion which the concupiscent and ireful powers do make with the Reason*...The ireful virtue is that which amongst all the other powers of the mind is less estranged from the nobility of the soul, in so much that Plato (doabting) seeketh whether it differeth from Reason or no." In Tasso, however, Platonic ideas are identified with Christian notions and both are often represented by the same personages. This is a device which has not been followed by Spenser in Bk. II, though something resembling it is to be noticed in Bk. I.

CHAPTER IV

CHASTITY

Chastity, the subject of the third Book of the Faerie Queene, is identified by some critics with the Aristotelian virtue of 'shame.'¹ It is regarded by some others as but another aspect of Temperance dealt with in Book II. Dean Church, for instance, says of Book III., "It is a repetition of the ideas of the latter part of Book II. with a heroine Britomart in place of the knight, Sir Guyon."² But chastity as expounded by Spenser is something different from Temperance. In Book II. we find two conceptions of Temperance, the Aristotelian and the Platonic. The Aristotelian conception is akin to the virtue of abstinence, the mean steering clear of the extremes of excess and defect of pleasure, especially the pleasure of touch. Thus it is a negative ideal based on prudential considerations. Platonic Temperance is a harmony in the soul—that state in which the different parts of the soul do their respective duties in implicit obedience to the dictates of Reason. No doubt Temperance itself is a great virtue, though Plato holds that this state of the soul is a preliminary condition of the growth of other virtues in it. Chastity constitutes a clear advance on both these conceptions, *viz.*, harmony in the soul and avoidance of the extremes in matters of pleasure. It is a positive conception and

Chastity in Bk. III of the Faerie Queene different from Temperance as dealt with in Bk. II. Noble love as described in the speech of Phaedrus in the Symposium furnishes its basic conception.

¹ M. Phil., III. 376 and M. Phil., June, 1918, p. 36.

² 'Spenser' in the English Men of Letters Series.

is equivalent to noble love or spiritual love between man and woman. Love of Britomart and Artegall is the main theme of the third book. Dowden says, "There is no chastity, Spenser would assure us, so incapable of stain as the heroic love of a magnanimous woman."¹ It is based on Temperance because no noble love is possible in one whose soul is in tumult and is the battle-ground of conflicting elements; but, at the same time, it is something more than Temperance. The difference was apparent to Plato himself as is clear from Socrates' recantation after his first speech in the *Phaedrus*, praising the rigid austerity of the non-lover. In his second speech he puts the lover far above the non-lover and the madness or frenzy of love is applauded as far nobler than the calm of Temperance, because every great and good thing has at its root love and frenzy as its generating cause. The conception of chastity is also an advance on the Aristotelian idea of Temperance as being less squeamish and more idealistic and inspiring.

The noble ideal of Chastity as found in the Third Book of the *Faerie Queene* is a complex conception—a blend of Platonism, chivalric traditions and Christian ideas. The conception of spiritual love between soul and soul is from Plato, the application of this idea to the relation between man and woman is due to chivalry and the ideal of wedlock which is painted as the consummation of true love and which is the final reward of lovers like Britomart and Artegall, Florimell and Marinell (and also in the *Epithalamion*), is due to the teachings of the Christian Religion.

The Platonic idea of Love cannot be fully appreciated without some reference to the state of society in Athens in the days of Plato. In the Greek cities of those times

But other ideas, Christian as well as chivalric, have been combined with it in Spenser.

¹ Dowden, *Spenser as Poet and Teacher*.

love between youths was very common—probably it was a relic of more barbarous times. Jowett in his Introduction to the Symposium says, “It is impossible to deny that some of the best and greatest of the Greeks indulged in attachments, which Plato in the Laws, no less than the universal opinion of Christendom,¹

Origin of Phædrus’
idea of love lay in the
institution of Friend-
ship in Early Greece.

has stigmatised as unnatural.” For a youth to be without a lover was looked upon as strange and also objectionable.

The elder of the pair was called the lover and the younger the beloved or “listener.” In civilised Greece such connections were deliberately encouraged owing to considerations of military training. It was the duty of the lover to train up the beloved in feats of arms, and the lovers fought side by side, endangering their lives for the sake of their mother country. In the Symposium Plato himself refers to this in the speech of Pausanias. “In some states such an attachment between youths was sanctioned by law while in others it was prohibited. Tyrants specially feared combinations of young men as tending to undermine their power by creating strong parties against them. Says Pausanias, “In Elis and Boeotia,...the universal sentiment is simply in favour of these connections and no one whether young or old has anything to say to their discredit....But in Ionia and other places, and generally in countries which are subject to the barbarians loves of youth share the evil repute of Philosophy and gymnastics because they are inimical to tyranny; for the interests of rulers require that their subjects should be poor in spirit and that there should be no strong bond of friendship or society among them.” The darker side of this love amongst youths was obvious to Plato and in Charmides and Lysis it is made sufficiently clear how physical charm was often the cause of the formation of

¹ Contemporary Review, Vol. LVIII, p. 412.

friendship. Plato tried to use this conception of love or friendship as a stepping-stone to the higher notion of love based on Virtue. He did not explain away the lower form of love—for the times were perhaps not yet ripe for such reformation, or, probably, as Jowett says, "he is conscious that the highest and noblest things in the world are not easily severed from the sensual desires or may even be regarded as a spiritualised form of them." He sees in the one the analogue or the reflection of the other and tries to explain how man may rise from the lower to the higher plane. He enunciates the higher love on the analogy of this vulgar love. The latter affords vulgar pleasure, the pleasure of the senses and the former, according to Plato, leads to spiritual bliss or the pleasures of the soul. In the former kind of love the beloved derives virtue and wisdom from the lover, leading to the permanent improvement of his inner nature. "Evil is the vulgar lover who loves the body rather than the soul and who is inconstant because he is a lover of the inconstant and therefore when the bloom of youth which he was desiring is over, he takes wings and flies away, in spite of all his words and promises; whereas the love of the noble mind, which is in union with the unchangeable, is ever-lasting."¹ Plato explains what this 'union with the unchangeable' means. "These two customs, one the love of youth, and the other the practice of philosophy and virtue in general, ought to meet in one, and then the beloved may honourably indulge the lover. For when the lover and beloved come together, having each of them a law, and the lover on his part is ready to confer any favour that he rightly can on his gracious loving one, and the other is ready to yield any compliance that he rightly can to him who is to make him wise and good; the one capable of communicating wisdom and

¹ Symposium.

virtue, the other seeking after knowledge, and making his object education and wisdom; when the two laws of love are fulfilled and meet in one, then and then only, may the beloved yield with honour to the lover."¹

By an extension of this idea of virtuous love between man and man, Plato arrives at the conception of the love of Absolute Beauty in the Symposium and of True Being in the Phaedrus. This is the consummation of Love in

Plato in the Symposium sublimates this feeling of Friendship into an attraction for the Supreme Being or Reality.

Plato; here beauty is the same thing as Truth. Through perfect love or a vision of this True Being the soul is rarefied and rendered capable of ascending Heaven.

But souls that are blind to it and being incapable of true love are addicted to the things of this world, gradually grow gross. The figures seen hovering over graveyards are the souls of worldly-minded people, that are unable and unwilling to go up to^o Heaven, being still 'glued' to sensible objects.²

Now in all this discussion about true love or spiritual love not a word is said by Plato about man's relations with woman. From the context and from the repeated references to the youth, it is certain that Plato was not thinking of the true and noble love which man might feel for woman. Neither in the Symposium nor in the Phaedrus nor even in the Republic where this philosopher was making experiments in social reconstruction and political organisation, shrinking from nothing in his search for Justice and Temperance and Love—not even from the community of wives,—is there any definite suggestion about true love between man and woman. To Plato chaste love means friendship between man and man for purposes of education and moral elevation, and unchaste love means love between such parties based on physical attraction and

¹ Pausanias' speech in the Symposium.

² Phaedo.

reminiscent of unnatural vice. Mention is made of woman

But woman is never thought of by Plato in connection with the inspiring influence of love.

only with reference to vulgar love. Pausanias says, "The Love who is the son of the common Aphrodite is essentially common, and has no discrimina-

tion, being such as the meaner sort of men feel, and is apt to be of women as well as of youths, and is of the body rather than of the soul."¹ In connection with his doctrine of generation or birth in beauty Plato mentions woman once more. Diotima says, "Men whose bodies only are creative, betake themselves to women and beget children—this is the character of their love; their offspring, as they hope, will preserve their memory and give them the blessedness and immortality which they desire in the future. But creative souls...conceive that which is proper for the soul to conceive or retain. And what are these conceptions?—wisdom and virtue in general." It is thus to be seen that Plato brings in woman only where love of the body is concerned; but Plato's favourite theory is that connection with sense degrades the soul and renders it gross so as to impede its heavenward flight. Thus the leading philosopher of Greece and the apostle of spiritual love recognises woman's power for evil but not her immense power for the good of man.

Spenser's conception of chaste love or spiritual love is the same as Plato's; only, in Spenser this love exists between man and woman whereas in Plato it exists between man and man. In Bk. III. such love is

The glorification of woman's love in Spenser is due to the influence of Chivalry and of Christianity (not mediæval Christianity).

depicted in the relations of Artegall and Britomart and, in a less degree, of Florimell and Marinell, Scudamore and Amoret. The substitution of woman in the place of man probably shows the

influence of chivalry which considerably uplifted the

¹ Symposium.

position of woman in society. It was the influence of chivalry combined with the Ethics of Christianity that led Dante to body forth his ideal love in a lovely woman — Beatrice Portinari.¹

Spenser retains Plato's distinction between vulgar or sensual love and noble love in applying his ideas to the relations between man and woman. The one enjoys beauty through sense while the other enjoys the beauty of the spirit and of ideas. The legend of chastity as a whole is rather formless and lacks unity of plan and construction, but the loosely connected episodes are based on this distinction between the two kinds of love. The characters that apprehend only the beauty of the body are Malcesta, Argante the giantess, the witch's son, Proteus, the Mariner, Malbecco and Paridell. Britomart,

Analysis of the conception of love typified by Britomart.

Amoret and Florimell are attracted by the beauty of the spirit & the soul. The

episodes all arise out of the contests between these two sets of characters. Florimell who loves Marinell falls in the power of beastly characters like Proteus, the Mariner and the witch's son and when she succeeds in escaping from the clutches of one, ill luck throws her into the power of another. Amoret, the chaste lady attached to Scdamore, is a victim to the enchantments of Busirane. On the distinction of the two forms of love figured forth in these two sets of characters Spenser says,

"Most sacred fyre, that burnest mightily
In living biests, ykindled first above
.....
Not that same, which doth base affections move
In brutish mindes, and filthy lust inflame,
But that sweete fit that doth true beantie love,
And choseth vertue for his dearest Dame."

(C. III. 1.)

¹ Contemporary Review, Vol. LVIII. p. 412. "The Dantesque and Platonic Ideals of Love."

Malcesta with all her beauty and refinement is a type of sensual desire and is held up by Spenser as a warning to chaste ladies.

"—she was given all to fleshly lust,
And poured forth in sensuall delight,"
.....
"—this was not to love, but lust, inclined "

(C. I.-49)

Britomart is the type of chaste love in the third book, and Spenser has tried to make her character consistent with the theory that chaste love is attracted only by the beauty of the soul. Britomart falls in love with Artegall when she sees his reflection on the mirror. It may be objected here that what captivates Britomart is sensible beauty. Spenser has anticipated this objection and has therefore had recourse to the mirror, for the reflection on the mirror is certainly less material and less sensible than the personal beauty of Artegall would have been if he were to catch her sight. Again, what strikes Britomart in the reflection of the Knight on the mirror is his heroism and other attributes rather than his physical charms.

Her love is kindled
by the knightly virtues
of Artegall, not by his
physical charms.

"Portly his person was, and much increast
Through his *Heroicke grace and honorable gest.*"

(C. II-24.)

It is the vision of some superior excellence that charms her heart. Hers is the desire of the moth for the star and she says in despair :—

"Nor man it is, nor other living wight,
For then some hope I might unto me draw ;
But th'only shade and semblant of a Knight,
Whose shape or person yet I never saw."

(C. II-38.)

The purity of this love becomes evident when compared with the passion of other princesses mentioned by Britomart's nurse, Glauce—the Arabian Myrrhe, Biblis and Pasiphaë. (C. II-41).

Chaste love in Spenser inspires in man noble aspirations—it leads him to strive for honour and distinction, and to spurn baseness and evil in every form. Here is it that it differs from Temperance which is a form of abstinence and hence a passive virtue. Chaste love is active and furnishes impulse to noble actions.

Her love is an inspiration to noble actions.

“—that sweete fit that doth true beantie love,
And choseth vertue for his dearest Dame,
Whence spring all noble deeds and never-dying fame :”

(C. III-1.)

Addressing Love as a God Spenser says :—

“ Well did Antiquity a God thee deeme,
That over mortall mindes hast so great might,
.....
And stirredst up *th' Heroes high intents,*
Which the late world admyres for wondrous moniments.”

(C. III-2.).

Again,—

“—love does alwaies *bring forth bounteous deeds,*
And in each gentle hart *desire of honor breeds.*”

(C. I-49.)

Along with kindling a desire of honour and fame, it drives away all vices of idleness and ungentleness :—

“—in brave sprite it kindles goodly fire,
That to all high desert and honour doth aspire.”

.....

- “ Ne suffereth it uncomely illnesse
 In his free thought to build her sluggish nest,
 Ne suffereth it *thought of ungentlenesse*
 Ever to creepe into his noble brest;
 But to the highest and the worthiest
 • Lifteth it up thatt els would lowly fall :”

(C. V-I-2.)

The speech of Phaedrus in the Symposium echoes the same sentiment and attributes the same inspiring power to noble love. “The principle which ought to be the guide of men who would nobly live—that principle, I say, neither kindred, nor honour, nor wealth nor any other motive is able to implant as surely as love. Of what am I speaking? Of the sense of honour and dishonour, without which neither states nor individuals ever do any good or great work. And I say that a lover who is detected in doing any dishonourable act, or submitting through cowardice when any dishonour is done to him by another, will be more pained at being detected by his beloved than at being seen by his father, or his companions, or any one else.....What lover would not choose rather to be seen by all mankind than by his beloved, either when abandoning his post or throwing away his arms? He would be ready to die a thousand deaths rather than endure this. Or who would desert his beloved or fail him in the hour of danger? The veriest coward would become an inspired hero, equal to the bravest, at such a time: Love would inspire him. That courage which, as Homer says, the God breathes into the soul of heroes, Love of himself infuses into the lover.” In Spenser Britomart is a concrete illustration of this inspiring power of noble Love. She was a sweet little girl unaccustomed to the ways of the world and pent up in her father’s castle. But she renounces seclusion, ease and comfort and passes through dangers and hardships

in her search for Artegall. Addressing the God of Love Spenser apostrophizes :—

“ Ne braver prooffe in any of thy powre
 Shewd'st thou, then in this royall Maid of yore,
 Making her seske an unknowne Paramoure,
 From the world's end, *through many a bitter slowre* :”

(C. III-3.)

Spenser develops in his Hymns the theory of the Neo-Platonists as to the connection of soul and body, the formative energy of the soul and its influence on physical beauty. There he states in the manner of the Neo-Platonists that moral virtues beautify the body and moral vices make it ugly. In the third book he anticipates his conclusions in the hymns and associates ugliness with moral turpitude, especially with sensuality. All the characters that are unchaste in the Platonic sense, *i.e.*, enjoy only physical beauty, are ugly and horrible to look at. Such are the Mariner, the witch's son, Proteus and Argante. Beauty is the monopoly only of the chaste and the morally good—*e.g.*, Florimell,

Unchaste love associated, in the manner of Plato, with physical deformity and chaste love with physical beauty.

Amoret and Britomart. Characters that are inordinately unchaste and excessively intemperate suffer the utmost physical degradation and are transformed into beasts. This transformation signifies the total extinction of the intellectual faculty. Plato says “ Men who have followed after gluttony and wantonness and drunkenness and have had no thought of avoiding them, would pass into asses and animals of that sort.” (Phaedo.) The beasts in the Bower of Bliss in Bk. II. are sensual men as shewn by their re-transformation by Guyon. Though this idea can be traced to Plato (and further to Homer) Tasso's Jerusalem Delivered is its immediate source. Those who are not excessively sensual are not subjected to the extreme penalty of transformation into

the likeness of beasts. Yet, they undergo some physical and intellectual degradation. The witch's son, and the forester who chases Florimell belong to this class. They have only a faint glimmering of reason and are exceedingly dull. Their appearance is uncouth and almost indistinguishable from that of beasts.

Spenser follows Plato in describing the effect of the beauty of chaste women on the beholder. Plato has tried to explain it through his highly fanciful figure of the winged soul. The charioteer drives the horses up the vault of Heaven and if they obey him the soul soars aloft easily and sees Beauty Absolute; otherwise the horses jostle and tread on each other and losing their wings sink down. When a beautiful object catches its sight on this earth, "the soul is warmed with sense, and is full of tickling and desire, the obedient steed then as always under the government of shame, refrains himself from leaping on the beloved, but the other instead of heeding the blows of the whip, prances away and gives all manner of trouble to his companion and to the charioteer, and urges them on toward the beloved and reminds them of the joys of love." They at first indignantly oppose him and will not be urged on to do terrible and unlawful deeds; but at last, when there is no end of evil, they yield and suffer themselves to be led on to do as he bids them. And now they are at the spot and behold the flashing beauty of the beloved. But when the charioteer sees that, his memory is carried to the true beauty, and beholds her in company with Modesty set in her holy place. And when he sees her he is afraid and falls back in *adoration*." (Phaedrus.)

Hence sight of beauty produces a feeling of reverence in the beholder.

This attitude of reverence towards chaste beauty is referred to in another place in the Phaedrus. Says Socrates, "He who has become corrupted is not easily carried

out of this world to the sight of absolute beauty in the other; he looks only at that which has the name of beauty in this world, and instead of being awed at the sight of her, like a brutish beast he rushes on to enjoy and beget But he whose initiation is recent, and who has been the spectator of many glories in the other world, is *amazed* when he sees any one having a God-like face or form, which is the expression or imitation of divine beauty; and at first a shudder runs through him, and some 'mis-giving' of a former world steals over him; then looking upon the face of his beloved as of a god he *reverences him*." (Phaedrus.) In Spenser Britomart is the type of chastity and her beauty is represented in several places as inspiring awe and adoration in the beholder. When in a fight with Artegall her helmet is destroyed, the Knight is taken aback at the sight of her amazing beauty. His arm is benumbed with fear and his sword drops to the ground,

" as if the steele had sence,
And felt some ruth or sence his hand did lacke,
Or both of them did thinke obedience
To doe to so divine a beauties excellence.
And he himselfe long gazing thereupon,
At last *fell humbly downe upon his knee*,
And of his wonder made religion,
Weening some heavenly goddesse he did see,

.....
Whilest trembling horror did his sense assaile,
And made eeh member quake, and manly heart to quayle."
(Bk. IV. C. VI-21-22.)

On another occasion in the castle of Malbecco Britomart had to put off her warlike array, and her superb beauty lay open to the view of the assembled guests.

"—they all on her,
Stood gazing, as if suddein *great affright*
Had them surprizd.....

.....

But seeing still the more desir'd to see,
 And ever *firmly fixed did abide*
In contemplation of divinitie :"

(Bk. III. IX. 23, 24.)

But the beauty of Hellenore, the wife of Malbecco produces no such effect on the guests. The report of her beauty had travelled far and wide and that is why the assembled guests were anxious to have her in their midst. Her beauty had been the subject of conversation amongst the party just before she appeared. Yet she only

Hellenore's beauty produces no such effect as Britomart's beauty does.

"—shewd herselfe in all a gentle courteous Dame."

(C. IX-26.)

Such is the difference between the beauty of a chaste lady and the false glamour of a vicious woman.

Plato says it is only the virtuous man—he who had a vision of Absolute Beauty in Heaven—who appreciates chaste Beauty in this world and worships it. But Spenser goes further. Beauty has such a power that, according to Spenser, it is sure to extort reverence from any man, virtuous or vicious, and to strike him with awe. The son of the witch was a grossly sensual creature, yet when he first saw Florimell in his mother's cottage, he

"—thought her *to adore* with humble spright :
T'adore thing so divine as beauty were but right."

(Bk. III. C. VII-11.)

Similarly when the mariner awoke and saw Florimell on his boat, he was entranced and dazzled with the glorious vision of her beauty, though this feeling of wonder disappeared rapidly and the boorish fellow tried to insult her. But still the wonderful effect of Beauty was there, however transitory it might be.

“—when he saw that blazing beauties beame,
some extasye
Assotted had his sence, or dazed was his eye.”

(Bk. III. C. VIII-22.)

Sensual love has many aspects and leads to various consequences. One of its marks as mentioned by Plato is jealousy. The lover of physical beauty is afraid lest somebody else should snatch off from him the object of his enjoyment. Hence the ordinary lover is even unwilling to let a third person speak to his beloved and is jealous of every man who may approach his darling. But it is material object only that can be robbed or stolen and hence those who love virtue are free from this anxiety and this jealousy. Socrates says, “He who is the victim of his passions and the slave of pleasure will, of course, desire to make his beloved as agreeable to himself as possible.....And therefore he cannot help being jealous, and will debar him from the advantages of society which would make a man of him.....All men will see, and the lover above all men, that his own first wish is to deprive his beloved of his dearest and best and most sacred possessions, father, mother, kindred, friends, all whom he thinks may be hinderers or reprovers of their sweet converse.” (Phaedrus.) Spenser seems to have acted on these remarks in creating the characters of

According to Plato sensual love produces jealousy. This is illustrated in the story of Malbecco and Hellenore.

Malbecco and Hellenore. Malbecco shuts up his wife always in his castle and allows none to see her. He had to be urgently and repeatedly requested by Paridell and Britomart before he could be persuaded to allow Hellenore to appear before the guests and to dine with them. It is the extraordinary physical charms of his wife that made him so jealous and suspicious. Socrates, continuing the characterisation of such a lover, says, “The lover is not only mischievous to

his love, he is also extremely unpleasant to live with. Equals, as the proverb says, delight in equals; equality of years inclines them to the same pleasures, and similarity begets friendship, and yet you may have more than enough* of this, and compulsion is always said to be grievous. Now the lover is not only unlike his beloved, *but he forces himself upon him*. For he is old and his love is young, and neither day nor night will he leave him if he can help; and necessity and the sting of desire drive him on, and allure him with the pleasure which he receives from seeing, hearing, touching, perceiving him.... But *what pleasure or consolation can the beloved be receiving all this time? Must he not feel the extremity of disgust when he looks at an old withered face? ... moreover he is jealously guarded and watched against every thing and everybody.*"¹ Spenser's characterisation of the relation between Malbetto and his wife corresponds to this picture. .

" But he is old, and withered like hay,
Unfit faire Ladies service to supply :
 The privie guilt whereof makes him alway
 Suspect her truth, and keepe continuall spy
 Upon her with his other blinked eye,
Ne suffreth he resort of living wight
Approch to her, ne keepe her company,
 But in close bowre her mewes from all mens sight,
 Depriv'd of kindly joy and naturall delight."

(C. IX-5.)

Spenser's ideal of chastity has been shewn to consist of noble love between man and woman, and Britomart is the type of this chastity. She is to be contrasted with another image of chastity, Belpheobe. The latter, too, loves spiritual beauty, the beauty of fair ideas and of the soul, but the beauty she loves is a dry abstraction

Britomart and Belpheobe — representing two different types of chastity.

¹ (Phaedrus.)

and not a concrete reality. Love of abstract virtue or pure morality leads up to the love of God gradually and this is Belpheobe's love. Spenser's tribute to her runs thus :—

“...this *faire virgin*, this Belpheobe fayre ;
To whom, in *perfect love and spotlesse fame*
Of chastitie, none living may compayre :”

The ideal of chastity and pure love set forth in these lines is distinctly mediæval. It makes light of worldly joy and happiness and aims at heavenly perfection. Belpheobe's chastity is too fine and too high for this world and seems to be almost a supermundane ideal, chaste ladies of this world possessing only a faint copy of this *ethereal* virtue just as earthly beauty is but a reflection of heavenly beauty. Spenser says :—

“Eternall God, in his almightie powre,
To make ensample of his heavenly grace,
In Paradise whylome did plant this flowre ;
Whence he it fetcht out of her native place,
And did in stocke of earthly flesh enrace,
That mortall men her glory should admyre.
In gentle Ladies breste and bounteous race
Of womankind it *fayrest flowre* doth spyre,
And beareth fruit of honour and all chast desyre.”

(C. V.-52.)

Britomart is a product of the spirit of the Renaissance which Spenser had imbibed in an abundant measure, and though Spenser's appreciation of the good points of mediævalism is beyond all doubt, his delineation of the two characters like Britomart and Belpheobe side by side shows clearly to which his sympathy leans—the spirit of the Middle Ages or the culture of the Renaissance.

CHAPTER V

FRIENDSHIP

Friendship in Spenser has no well-defined meaning. In the fourth book of the *Faerie Queene* it conveys different meanings in different places. Warren says, "Friendliness, unanimity, good-will, friendship and love in the spiritual sense —are all mingled in Spenser's term "Friendship."¹ The sources of the idea of friendship too are more than one, though Aristotle is drawn upon more largely than Plato.

Friendship means many different things in Spenser.

Friendship was a peculiar institution in ancient Greece. This institution, however, was not confined to Greece alone. A profound conception of friendship is met with in the Literature of the ancient Hindus as also in that of the Sufis in Arabia. The origin of Hellenic Friendship has already been discussed.² Whether friendship among the ancient Hindus and the Arabs had a similar origin is a question which needs investigation.

Plato examines the idea of friendship in *Lysis*. It means the same thing as love as defined in the *Symposium*.

The refined Greek ideas on friendship are to be found in Plato and Aristotle. Plato's dialogue on friendship³ is in a way a repetition of the speech of Diotima in the *Symposium*. The theme in the *Symposium* is love and her efforts aim at a serious solution of the problem. In *Lysis* the subject of enquiry is the same

¹ Warren's Ed. of *F.Q.*, Vol. IV

² Chapter IV.

³ *Lysis*.

as in the Symposium, though it is called Friendship and not love. The Lysis however presents a tentative attempt at a definition of Friendship, and the way in which Socrates exposes the contradictions that arise in the course of the discussion shews the uncertainty of thought. At first Socrates suggests that friendship exists only where there is a reciprocation of sentiments, but the theory becomes untenable in view of the fact that children sometimes hate their loving parents. Then an attempt is made to define friendship as a feeling between two likes, but the bad are incapable of friendship as are those who are absolutely good. The conclusion is that those who are neither good nor bad are the friends of the good. This is exactly Diotima's conclusion (on love) in the Symposium. In Lysis, however, Plato goes on analysing the idea of love (or friendship) still further, and says that it is the congenial that is the object of love. This conclusion is reached through a maze of arguments difficult to follow. Whatever may be the conclusion, throughout the numerous arguments and the shifting grounds in the dialogues of Symposium and Lysis there runs the idea of the universal connection of the good with Love.

In Plato desire for good is the essence of friendship.

Whether love exists between good and good or between good and that which is neither bad nor good, the idea of the good and aspiration for it is always present in Plato's thoughts on friendship or love. And this is the idea which Aristotle seizes on as being eminently suggestive and illuminating, without following further Plato's abstruse arguments. In classifying friendship he assigns the first place to friendship between good people. In

This idea is found in Aristotle's Ethics also and therefore in Spenser true friendship exists between good and honest men only, e.g., Cambel and Triamond.

Spenser's Faerie Queene the Platonic idea of friendship or love of the good for each other is to be met with, but it is Plato as presented

by Aristotle; in other words, it is the most general Platonic idea separated from Plato's arguments and his doubts as to its validity. Aristotle does not care to enquire whether it is the good or those who are neither good nor bad that are capable of friendship. Plato says, "People really mean, as I suppose, that the good are like one another and friends to one another, and that the bad, as is often said of them, are never at unity with one another or with themselves, but are passionate and restless, and that which is at variance and enmity with itself is not likely to be in union or harmony with any other thing."¹ Aristotle defines perfect friendship thus: "The perfect friendship or love is the friendship or love of people who are good and alike in virtue; for these people are alike in wishing each other's good, in so far as they are good, and they are good in themselves. But it is people who wish the good of their friends for their friends' sake, that are in the truest sense friends, as their friendship is the consequence of their own character and is not an accident. Their friendship therefore continues as long as their virtue, and virtue is a permanent quality."²

Spenser's portrayal of Cambel and Triamond shows the trace of this Greek conception of Friendship. Their friendship is based on admiration of each other's noble character or virtue.

"For *virtue is the band* that bindeth hearts most sure"

(Bk. IV. C. II-29).

Their friendship is also expressly described as

"—the band

Of noble minds derived from above

Which, being *knit with virtue* never will remove."

¹ Lysis.

² N. Ethics, Bk. VIII, Ch. IV.

Again, Spenser says,

“—*the band of virtuous mind,*
Me seemes, the gentle hart should most assured bind.”

(C. IX. I).

Of bad persons' capacity for friendship Aristotle has the same opinion as Plato. Aristotle also thinks that such people have not even self-love the extension of which leads to friendship. “Such people are at variance with themselves, and while desiring one set of things, wish for something else. They are, *e.g.*, incontinent people; they choose not what seems to themselves good, but what is pleasant, although it is injurious.” Following Plato and Aristotle Spenser says,

Spenser holds with Aristotle and Plato that bad people are incapable of friendship.

“—in *base mind* or friendship dwells nor enmity.”

(C. IV-11.)

and

“And friendship, which a faint affection breeds
Without regard of good, dyes like ill grounded seeds.”

(C. IV-I.)

Though Aristotle is at one with Plato in believing that no true friendship can exist between persons who are unable to perceive the beauty of noble character and virtue, yet as a practical man he has not ignored the combinations which bad people often form amongst themselves for seeking profit or pleasure. Accordingly he has put such combination of people who have no title to virtue in the second class of friendship (the first place having already been given to what he calls perfect friendship). This combination or friendship does not last long. Following Aristotle Spenser makes the friendship of Blandamour and Paridell depend on expectation of profit.

There are also many details into which Spenser follows Aristotle.

In the opening stanzas of Book IV. of the *Faerie Queene* is found another conception of Friendship which is solely derived from Plato and to which there is no parallel in Aristotle. Spenser uses the word "love" and not "friendship" in these stanzas and in reality they sing of noble love as mentioned in the speech of Phaedrus. This love is somewhat different from that aspiration for the Good or Beauty which is celebrated towards the end of the Symposium, though both have their origin in the love of moral and spiritual beauty. The love of the Good is love of an abstraction, while this noble love flowers and blossoms up round a concrete object, high-souled man or woman.

By friendship Spenser also means noble love as taught in the speech of Phaedrus in the Symposium.

"For it of honor and all vertue is
The roote, and brings forth glorious flowres of fame,
That crowne true lovers with immortall bliss,
The meed of them that love, and do not love amisse"

(Introduction to Bk. IV-2.)

Spenser celebrates this love as chastity in Bk. III of the *Faerie Queene*.¹

Spenser gives another meaning to friendship in the Canto on the temple of Venus. The characterisation of Discord (or Ate) in Canto I. of Book IV is also connected with this conception of friendship, for Discord only spoils the work done by Concord who represents this spirit of friendship which is equivalent to cosmogonic love. Creation is due to the implanting of this love or friendship in the elements which before creation were in a state of perpetual

Friendship also includes concord which means harmony in the primitive chaos, leading to the creation of the universe.

¹ *Vide* Chapter IV.

warfare known as the chaos. Concord is thus described in Canto X of Book IV:—

“ By her the heaven is in his course contained.
And all the world in state unmoved stands,
As their Almighty maker first ordained,
And bound them with inviolable bands ;
Else would the waters overflow the lands,
And fire devoure the ayre, and hell them quight,
But that she holds them with her blessed hands.”

(C. X-35.)

Discord described in Canto I is just the opposite of Concord.

“ For all her studie was and all her thought
How she might overthrow the things that Concord wrought.
.....
For all this worlds faire workmanship she tride
Unto his last confusion to bring,”

(C. I-29-30.)

The description of the harmony into which the primeval elements settled down with the creation of the world as love or friendship is very old in Greek Literature. It is found even in Empedocles. In the Symposium Eryximachus deals with the harmonious blending of different

This conception of love or friendship is met with in Empedocles and in the speech of Eryximachus in the Symposium.

humours in man's constitution, in the course of the seasons, etc., in order to show that the same principle of order and balance manifests itself in human body as well as in inanimate objects.

Everywhere the union of different elements leads to disorder or evil if it violates proportion and principle ; this is vulgar love as opposed to perfect love. “The good physician is one who is able to separate fair love from foul, or to convert one into the other ; and if he is a skilful practitioner, he knows how to eradicate and how to

implant love, whichever is required; and he can reconcile the most hostile elements in the constitution, and make them friends. Now the most hostile are the most opposite, such as hot and cold, moist and dry, bitter and sweet, and the like. And my ancestor, Asclepius, knowing how to implant friendship and accord in these elements, was the creator of our art. The course of the season is also full of both principles; and when, as I was saying, the elements of hot and cold, moist and dry, attain the harmonious love of one another and blend in temperance and harmony, they bring to men, animals,² and vegetables, health and wealth, and do them no harm; whereas the wantonness and overbearingness of the other love affecting the seasons is a great injurer and destroyer, and is the source of pestilence. . . .”¹ Spenser applies this idea of harmonious union of different elements in the “human body and in the course of the seasons to the creation of the world and personifies the tendency to disorder inherent in the elements by Discord. In the Hymne in honour of Love Spenser develops this conception of creation exactly as in Canto X of Bk. IV, and the function of Concord is there assigned to Cupid, the son of Venus. Thus in this Hymne Spenser expressly says, in the manner of Empedocles, that love lies at the root of creation.

“The earth, the ayre, the water, and the fyre,
Then gan to raunge themselves in huge array,
And with contrary forces to conspyre
Each against other by all meanes they may,
Threatning their owne confusion and decay:
Ayre hated earth, and water hated fyre,
Till Love relented their rebellious yre.

(H. L. st. 12.)

¹ Speech of Eryximachus

CHAPTER VI

METAPHYSICS AND COSMOGONY

Spenser's borrowings from ancient Philosophy are seen in a nutshell in his picture of the Garden of Adonis in Book III, C. VI. Following his master Socrates, Plato had generally confined his speculations to Ethics but in

Spenser's Cosmogonic ideas are taken from the Timaeus.

the Timaeus he took up the enquiry of the physicists and metaphysicians of the Pre-Socratic Age. Fanciful as this production is, later generations have been attracted to it by the charm of Plato's literary skill and his consummate art. Spenser drew many of his notions on metaphysics from the Timaeus. Plato's doctrines, however, are often found in him as modified by Plotinus.

The term "Garden of Adonis" occurs in the Phaedrus where it means an earthen pot for the rapid and artificial growth of plants. Socrates asks Phaedrus, "Would a husbandman, who is a man of sense, take the seeds, which he values and which he wishes to bear fruit, and in sober seriousness plant them during the heat of summer, in some garden of Adonis, that he may rejoice when he sees them in eight days appearing in beauty? at least he would do so, if at all, only for the sake of amusement and pastime. But when he is in earnest he sows in fitting soil, and practises husbandry, and is satisfied if in eight months the seeds which he has sown arrive at perfection?" Spenser makes the garden into the birth-place of all created beings. "There is the first seminary of all

things that are born to live and die." Souls return there after their sojourn on the earth, and bodies of all kinds of animals are fashioned there out of gross matter. Spenser is indebted for this picture to Plato's account of creation in the *Timæus*, and where he differs from Plato he follows Plotinus.

According to Plato God creates the world according to a Pattern out of the four elements of earth, water, fire and air. (Of these only two are the principal elements, the other two being the means of combining them.) Then he puts the soul into world. "The creator reflecting on the things which are by nature visible, found that no unintelligent creature taken as a whole was fairer than intelligent taken as a whole and that intelligence could not be present in anything which was devoid of soul. For which reason, when he was framing the Universe, he put intelligence in soul, and the soul in body, that he might be the creator of a work which was by nature fairest and best." The mortal bodies of men and of lower animals are created by lesser gods out of the same materials and in the same way and only the soul is furnished by God. In Spenser the material for creation is supplied by the chaos, the eternally deformed substance. Matter from the chaos puts on form and thus becomes body which is then united to the soul.

"An huge eternall chaos, which supplyes
The substances of natures fruitfull progenyes.
All things from thence doe their first being fetch,
And borrow matter whereof they are made;
Which, *whenas forme and feature it does ketch,*
Becomes a body, and doth then invade
The state of life out of the griesly shade."

(Bk. III. C. VI. 36-37.)

The account of creation given in the first part of the *Timæus* is a figment of Plato's imagination and highly

mythical in colouring. Later on in the same work Plato is more precise in his theories. Spenser derives little from this previous fanciful description and his differences from it are obvious. Firstly, Plato frames body out of the four elements without any accession of form, and then puts the soul into it, thereby making it intelligent. For accession of form into matter Plato probably substitutes

But Spenser differs from Plato in his conception of matter and of accession of form into it.

the workmanship of God according to the eternal Pattern—a highly poetic imagery. Again, Plato has not quite been able to rise above the idea of four elements as propounded by Empedocles and has no conception of matter as the substance underlying them all. Later on when Plato tries to be more precise and scientific, he reaches a hazy notion of matter as the origin of all physical objects but confuses this notion with the idea of space or extension. “The mother and receptacle of all created and visible and in any way sensible things, is not to be termed earth, or air, or fire, or water, or any of their compounds, or any of the elements from which these are derived, but is an invisible and formless being which receives all things and in some mysterious way partakes of the intelligible, and is most incomprehensible. In saying this we shall not be far wrong; as far, however, as we can attain to a knowledge of her from the previous considerations, we may truly say that fire is that part of her nature which from time to time is inflamed, and water that which is moistened, and that the mother substance becomes earth and air, in so far as she receives the impression of them.” This indescribable substance is variously called by Plato “mother of forms” and “receptacle and nurse of generation” and is regarded as intermediate between his intelligible Pattern and the created copy. It can be called not “this” or “that,” but only “such,” since it changes its

shape with the impress of the Pattern. Plato also speaks of the "mother of all created things" as "in some mysterious way partaking of the intelligible." This idea has some resemblance with the account of creation contained in the lines of Spenser quoted above. But for the clearer conception of matter and form and of accession of form into matter as found in these lines taken from Spenser's description of the Garden of Adonis, Spenser is indebted to Plotinus. Plato's conception of

Plotinus' notion of matter is more clear and scientific than that of Plato who confounds it with space. Spenser follows Plotinus here.

matter shakes off its haziness and uncertainty in Plotinus. The latter criticises the theory of the four elements, though he does not mention Plato. "Empedocles, however, who substitutes the elements for matter, has the corruption of them testifying against him."¹ He mentions and criticises Anaxagoras and describes matter as "one, continued and void of quality." "Matter is also incorporeal," for corporeality is inseparable from form, and is the product of the accession of form into gross matter. This notion of matter is an advance on Plato's conception which labours under the idea of four elements and ultimately resolves them into space.

Plato is fond of figures and symbols and loves to deliver his messages in allegories. His first theory of creation, as already seen, is highly fanciful. He next tries to be more scientific in thought and as a result succeeds in attaining to more philosophic conceptions of matter and form. No sooner has he done this than he clothes these dry abstractions in the flesh and blood of fancy. Form, matter (or space) and created body are allegorised by him into father, mother and child respectively. "For the present we have only to conceive of three natures: First,

¹ Plotinus "On Matter," tr. T. Taylor.

that which is in process of generation; secondly, that in which the generation takes place; and

In the manner of Plato, form, matter or space and created body are allegorised by Spenser into father, mother and child respectively in the myth of Adonis.

thirdly, that of which the thing generated is a resemblance. And we may liken the receiving principle to a mother and the source or spring to a father, and the intermediate nature to a child;

and we may remark further, that if the model is to take every variety of form, then the matter in which the model is fashioned will not be duly prepared unless, it is formless, etc." Form is thus the "the father" or "the source or spring" of all created things. But form is derived from the eternal Pattern in accordance with which God created the world. Spenser links the conception of permanence of form or of the Pattern, the father of form, to the story of the immortality of Adonis, and Adonis is accordingly described as the father of all forms.¹

"All be he subject to mortalitie,
Yet is eterne in mutabilitie,

.....
For him the Father of all formes they call:
Therefore needs mote he live, that living gives to all."

(Bk. III. C. VI—17.)

The idea opposite to the one dealt with above, namely, that of the permanence of matter under all changes of form is also suggested in the *Timaeus*. Plato argues that water by condensation becomes stone and earth and the same element, when melted and dispersed, passes into vapour and air. Air, when inflamed, becomes fire and fire, when extinguished, becomes cloud and mist. He gives another illustration, *viz.*, that of figures of gold, —though their forms are changed, the metal remains the same. Plotinus also

Permanence of matter suggested in Plato and Plotinus is dealt with by Spenser in the *Faerie Queene* as well as in his *Cantos of Mutabilitie*.

¹ See Harrison's *Platonism in English Poetry*, pp. 215-216.

mentions Plato's illustration of the gold leaf and says, "There is not a perfect corruption of that which is changed; since if there was, there would be a certain essence which would be dissolved into nonentity. Nor, again, does that which is generated proceed into being from that which in every respect is not; but there is a mutation from one form into another." Spenser expresses the idea thus:—

"The substance is not chaungd nor altered,
But th' only forme and outward fashion;
For every substance is conditioned
To chaunge her hew, and sondry formes to don,
Meet for her temper and complexion:"

(Bk. III. C. VI.—38.)

Permanence amidst change is also the theme of the Cantos of Mutabilitie. Here, however, the cases both for change and permanence are put with equal force and logic, and the reader is reminded of the two opposing schools of Greek Philosophy which had fought so long over this problem. The spirits of Heraclitus and Parmenides seem to have come over Mutabilitie and Jove as they argued for "Flux" and "Being" respectively. Plato's realism was inconsistent with the Heracleitan flux, and the influence of Plato is to be seen in the judgment delivered by Dame Nature supporting Jove.

Besides the influence of Plato, there is the suggested influence of Giordano Bruno, the Italian Neo-Platonist, on the cantos of Mutabilitie. The reconciliation of the claims of change and permanence, the idea that through all change works a fixed and changeless law is from Bruno.

Idea of permanence
in the cantos of Mu-
tabilitie derived from
Bruno.

Nature says:—

"I well consider all that ye have said,
And find that all things stedfastnesse do hate
And changed be; yet, being rightly wayd,
They are not changed from their first estate;

But by their change their being do dilate,
 And turning to themselves at length againe,
 Do worke their owne perfection so by fate :
Then over them Change doth not rule and raigne,
But they raigne over Change, and do their states maintaine."

(Bk. VII. C. VII.—58.)

This idea also finds expression in the following passage from *Gli Eroici Furori* of Bruno:—"Nature as a whole cannot suffer annihilation; and thus at due times, *in fixed order, she comes to renew herself*, changing and altering all her parts; and this, it is fitting, should come about with *fixity of succession*, every part taking place of all the other parts."¹

The manner in which the soul is united to the body in the Garden of Adonis is reminiscent of the account of creation in the *Timæus*. According to Plato the body and the soul are created separately. "The soul whether of the world or of man is created by God as is also the material world, while the body of man is created by the lesser gods. The soul is then put in the centre of the body. "And in the centre he (God) put the soul, which he diffused throughout body, making it also the exterior environment of it."² In Spenser the images are almost the same as in Plato. Shapes of creatures are arranged in rows in the Garden of Adonis and thousands of souls fly about, and old Genius unites the souls with the bodies before sending them out to the world.

Manner of the union of soul and body in Spenser is suggested by the *Timæus*.

"Infinite shapes of creatures there are bred,
 And uncouth formes, which none yet ever knew :
 And every sort is in a sondry bed
 Sett by it selfe, and ranckt in comely row ;

¹ O. Milton's *Modern Studies*—"Giordano Bruno in England."

² *Timæus*.

Some fit for reasonable souls t' indew ;
 Some made for beasts, some made for birds to weare ;"
 (Bk. III. C. VI. 35.)

Again,—

"He letteth in, he letteth out to vend
 All that to come into the world desire :
 A thousand thousand naked babes attend
 About him day and night, which doe require
 That he *with fleshly weeds would them attire* ;
 Such as him list, such as eternall fate
 Ordained hath, he clothes with sinfull mire,
 And sendeth forth to live in mortall state
 Till they agayn returne backe by the hinder gate."
 (Bk. III. C. VI. 32.)

Plato has tried to prove the immortality of the soul with various arguments in the *Meno* and the *Phaedo*.

Argument for the soul's immortality is the same in Spenser as in the *Phaedo*.

One argument in the *Phaedo* seems to be basis of the imagery which shadows forth the immortality of the soul in the garden of Adonis. Spenser represents the same souls as passing through a round of births, deaths and rest in this garden. Souls come into the world from the garden of Adonis and return there after their stay on the earth.

"—he clothes with sinfull mire,
 And sendeth forth to live in mortall state,
 Till they agayn returne backe by the hinder gate.

.....

Some thousand yeares so doen they there remayne,
 And then of him are clad with other hew,
 Or sent into the chaungefull world agayne,
 Till thither they retourne where first they grew :
 So, like a wheele, arownd they ronne from old to new."

(Bk. III. VI. 32, 33.)

Plato's argument embodies the same idea under a slightly altered form. It is out of the departed souls

that new souls are born in this world. Thus out of death comes life—otherwise, if souls were altogether annihilated the stock of life would gradually run short; in other words, the soul is immortal. “The ancient doctrine of which I have been speaking affirms that souls go from hence into the other world, and return hither, and are born from the dead. Now if this be true, and the living come from the dead, then our souls must be in the other world, for if not, how could they be born again? And this would be conclusive, if there were any real evidence that the living are only born from the dead.

.....
Are not all things which have opposites generated out of their opposites?...And I want to show that this holds universally of all opposites...

Is not death opposed to life? Yes. And are they generated one from the other? Yes. What is generated from life? Death. And what from death? I can only answer life.

My dear Cebes, if all things which partook of life were to die, and after they were dead remained in the form of death and did not come to life again, all would at last die and nothing would be alive.” (Phaedo).

Platonism Tinged with Neo-Platonism

CHAPTER VII

COMBINATION OF PLATONISM AND CALVINISM,— HOLINESS

In his letter to Raleigh Spenser says clearly that he derives the virtues of which his principal knights are the patrons from Aristotle. But in Aristotle's *Ethics* no mention is made of any virtue called Holiness. There have arisen consequently differences of opinion as to the source of Holiness—the virtue dealt with in the very first book of the *Faerie Queene*. .

Not only is there no mention of Holiness in the *Nicomachean Ethics* but the description of the virtue as detailed in the allegory of Book I. does not correspond

Source of Holiness,
—Aristotle according
to the Letter to
Raleigh.

with anything in the characteristics given by Aristotle of the moral virtues mentioned and totalised by him. A writer in the *Modern Philology* has made an ingenious attempt to discover in Holiness the Aristotelian virtue of high-mindedness or magnanimity.¹ His arguments, which are not very convincing, should be examined in detail. He writes by way of protest against M. Jusserand² who, noting the want of correspondence in various points between Spenser's Letter to Raleigh and the *Faerie Queene*, holds that the poet's

¹ June, 1918. p. 32.

² See *Modern Philology*, Vol. III. p. 373.

Aristotelian reminiscence must have become obscured

Jusserand points out that in Aristotle's scheme of virtues Holiness is not even mentioned.

when he wrote to Raleigh, and that the passages in the Letter which state that the virtues are derived from Aristotle are misleading.¹ Mr. De Moss, the critic

of M. Jusserand in the *Modern Philology*, takes his stand on Spenser's Letter to Raleigh and relies on those passages in which the poet expressly says that he represents the virtues of Aristotle by his champion knights. He contends that it is inconceivable that a classical Scholar like Spenser should have referred to Aristotle without being sure whether the reference was true.² The passage he quotes in support of his argument is this:—"So in the person of Prince Arthure I sette forth magnificence in particular, which virtue, for that (according to Aristotle and the rest) it is the perfection of all the rest; and containeth in it them all, therefore in, the whole course I mention the deedes of Arthure applyable to that virtue which I write of in that book. But of the XII. other virtues, I make XII. other knights the patrones, for the more variety of the history." Now this very passage is against the contention of Mr. De Moss. In Bk. II. Ch. VII. of Aristotle's *Ethics* mention is made of thirteen

Arguments supporting the Aristotelian origin examined and rejected.

virtues and it is generally admitted that Arthur stands for Magnanimity and not for Magnificence as, perhaps inadvertently, put by Spenser.³ "The twelve

other knights" of Spenser's projected poem must according to the Letter stand for the twelve other virtues besides Magnanimity. It is thus clear that none of them is the type of magnificence (or magnanimity), since none of them can play the rôle assigned to Arthur. To symbolise

¹ *Modern Philology*, Vol. III. p. 376

² *Ibid*, June, 1918. p. 39.

³ *Ibid*, Vol. III. p. 382

magnanimity which, according to Aristotle as well as¹ Spenser, is the perfection of all the other virtues by Arthur as well as by another minor knight (Mr. De Moss suggests Redcrosse) would not certainly be consistent with the pre-eminent position intended to be given to Arthur and would surely destroy the symmetry of the plan of the poem, according to which every book is to describe the adventure of a particular knight while all the books are to contain descriptions of Arthur's activities, since Arthur has to take part in the adventure of every knight as necessity for his help arises. Again, if both Arthur and Redcrosse typify the same virtue their activities and characterisation ought to be similar. "The high-minded man," says Aristotle, "is capable of conferring benefits but ashamed of receiving them, as in the one case he feels his superiority and in the other his inferiority."¹ The figure of the Redcrosse knight is not that of a warrior imagining himself to be superior to everybody else and destined to bring succour to others; his weakness is apparent in the guile practised on him by Duessa, in his defeat, by Orgoglio, his correction in the House of Holiness and his rescue by Arthur. Mr. De Moss lays great stress on the incidents and adventures as bringing out the details of the virtues represented by the knights. But the enemy of Redcrosse is not Meanmindedness the opposite of Magnanimity, but a Dragon or Evil.

"And ever as he rode his heart did earne
To prove his puissance in battell brave

.....

Upon his foe, a Dragon horrible and sterne."

(F. Q. Bk. CI. 3)

His adventures comprise encounters against Error, Pride, and Sansfoy, and his succour and inspiration come from the House of Holiness.

¹ Ethics, Bk. IV, Ch. IV.

It would appear from the above that it is useless to search for the source of Holiness in Aristotle notwithstanding the express statement of the poet in his Letter. Holiness is akin to notions like sanctity and sacredness which are usually associated with rituals, and as Aristotle separated Religion, Politics and Morals, it is not surprising to miss Holiness in the list of his moral virtues. Plato had, however, brought to the study of Philosophy all the fervour of Religion and he had an all-embracing vision of the problems of human life—religious, moral and political. It is actually in Plato that we find the virtue of Holiness mentioned. Plato also discussed and elaborated the conception of this virtue though he did not give it the importance attached to it in the Faerie Queene. But Spenser's conception of Holiness owes much to the teaching of Christianity, and this will be dealt with later on.

Holiness is mentioned in the *Phaedo*, the *Meno*, the *Euthyphro* and also in the *Protagoras*. In the *Euthyphro* Holiness or Piety is sought to be connected with supermundane purity and is defined 'to be that part of justice which attends to the Gods, as there is the other part of Justice which attends to men.' In the *Protagoras*, however, emphasis is laid on the unity of virtue which ought to regulate man's life. This virtue is variously

Holiness traced to
Plato's Philosophy—
the *Protagoras*, the
Euthyphro,

called Justice, Temperance and Holiness. 'Is there or is there not some one quality in which all the citizens must be partakers, if there is to be a city at all?.....If there be any such quality and this quality or unity is not the art of the carpenter or the smith or the potter but Justice and Temperance and *Holiness*, and in a word, manly virtue—if this is the quality of which all men must be partakers, and which is the very condition of their learning or doing anything else.....'¹ Thus in

¹ *Protagoras*

the Protagoras, Holiness is equivalent to the grand virtue of Justice discussed in the Republic and described as the climax of human perfection. This is different from Holiness as defined in the Euthyphro. Yet even in the Protagoras there appears a dim consciousness of the peculiar and sacrosanct nature of this virtue and its kinship to sanctity when, through a process of dialectic, justice is proved to be unholy. Spenser also reads this peculiar meaning into Holiness and there can be no doubt that Spenser's conception of this virtue is partially borrowed from these dialogues of Plato, especially the Phaedb and the Phaedrus, and more from the Phaedo than from the Phaedrus.¹ In both the Phaedo and the Phaedrus, Plato's transcendentalism reaches its highest flight. In both the underlying conception is that of a supreme Reality—Truth, Beauty or Good—to be perceived by the soul or the mind. The Phaedrus only describes this Reality—and the picture given is so vivid and inspiring

that it seems as if the author were
 the Phaedurs actually looking on some glorious vision. The winged unbodied souls soar aloft to have a glimpse of the Eternal glory but they hardly succeed and, being tainted with sense, most of them sink into the gulf below. The Phaedrus goes thus far and no farther. It does not discuss at any length the qualities necessary for perceiving Truth or Beauty nor does it indicate what sort of purification the soul should undergo so as to be fit to perceive this supreme Reality. The words used to paint the impurity caused to the soul by sense do not call up associations usually connected with Holiness or with Sin. It is from the Phaedrus that Spenser takes the vision of Truth as the ultimate reward of human effort, but it is from the Phaedo that

¹ Miss Winstansley, in her Introduction to Book I. of *Fairie Queene*, traces Spenser's idea to the Phaedrus.

he takes the ideal of purity which entitles a man to this felicity.

Like the Phaedrus the Phaedo, too, insists repeatedly on the purity of Truth or Wisdom and its freedom from the taint of matter, and reiterates more than once that it is mind and not sense that can rightly appreciate this divine reality. Impressions that come through sense are wrong and misleading. But the soul has not always the fine faculty to which alone the vision of Truth lies open. When it is "glued" with matter or when it works through a material medium, it gets distorted ideas of Truth.

"When does the soul attain truth?—for in attempting to consider any thing in company with the body she is obviously deceived.

"Yes, that is true.

"Then must not existence be revealed to her in thought if at all? Yes.

"Is there or is there not an absolute Justice?

"Assuredly there is.

"And absolute beauty and absolute good? Of course. But did you ever behold any of them with your eyes? Certainly not.

Is not the nearest approach to the knowledge of their several natures made by him who so orders his intellectual vision as to have the most exact conception of the essence of that which he considers? Certainly."

Again, the soul that values sensible truth alone degenerates and is rendered gross till it can no more perceive truth in its purity. Such a soul retains its frailty even when separated from the body by death. "The soul which has been polluted...until she is led to believe that the truth only exists in a bodily form which a man

and the Phaedo which defines Holiness and also prescribes means for its attainment.

may touch and see and taste and use for the purposes of his lusts—the soul, I mean, accustomed

to hate and fear and avoid the intellectual principle which to the bodily eye is dark and invisible, and can be attained by Philosophy—do you suppose that such a soul as this will depart pure and unalloyed ?”¹ That state of the soul in which it is fit for its proper function is its purity. Freedom from the contact of sense constitutes purity in the opinion of Plato. Plato’s idea of purity is not that of a Philosopher busy with his analysis and his processes of elimination but that of a devotee preparing to enter a temple to say his prayers. “In this present life, I reckon that we make the nearest approach to knowledge when we have the least possible concern or interest in the body, and are not saturated with the bodily nature, but remain pure until the hour when God himself is pleased to release us. And then *the foolishness of the body will be cleared away* and we shall be pure and hold conversation with other pure souls and know of ourselves *the clear light everywhere; and this is surely the light of truth.* For no impure thing is allowed to approach the true.”¹ In Spenser this state of purity is described as Holiness, and Truth or the Supreme Reality or Wisdom is symbolised by Una. The Redcrosse Knight gains a vision of the heavenly beauty of Una when he attains to a state of absolute purity or Holiness.

The means of attaining to purity or Holiness as a state of the soul is dealt on at length in the *Phaedo*. It is called Purgation and consists in removing the soul’s connections with sense, its tendency to sense-perception and its enjoyment of images of beauty. The soul is thus made more and more intelligent. In the language of Plato the soul has “*to be gathered up and collected into herself.*” “The lovers of knowledge are conscious that

The means is called Purgation in the *Phaedo*.

¹ *Phaedo*.

their souls, when Philosophy receives them, are simply fastened and glued to their bodies : the soul is only able to view existence through the bars of a prison, and not in her own nature ; she is wallowing in the mire of all ignorance ; and Philosophy, seeing the terrible nature of her confinement, and that the *captive* through desire is led to conspire in her own captivity (for the lovers of knowledge are aware that this was the original state of the soul, and that when she was in this state, Philosophy received and gently counselled her, and wanted to release her, pointing out to her that the eye is full of deceit, and also the ear and the other senses and, persuading her to retire from them in all but the necessary use of them, and to be *gathered up and collected into herself*, and to trust only to herself and her own intuitions to absolute existence, and mistrust that which comes to her through others and is subject to vicissitude).—Philosophy shows her that this is visible and tangible, but that, what she sees in her own nature is intellectual and invisible.”¹ The process suggested in these passages is what in ordinary language would be called intellection or generalisation. Ordinary knowledge is derived from sense-perception but higher knowledge or Truth, such as is conceived here, can be reached only through the efforts of the mind. The necessity for concentration of the mind and the exercise of its powers as a means of attaining self-realisation is insisted on most strongly in Neo-Platonism. Plotinus classifies virtues as political, cathartic and theoretic,² and he defines cathartic virtues as those that pertain to the intellect only, withdrawing it from other things, chiefly from the instruments of sense. He even asserts that these virtues lead to holiness and prepare man for union with God (*i.e.*, Truth). His imagery is the same as Spenser’s,—

¹ Phaedo.

² Plotinus on the Virtues. Enneads II. ii

i.e., strikingly Christian. "Since evils are here, and revolve from necessity, about this terrestrial place, but the soul wishes to fly from evils, it is requisite to fly from hence. What therefore is the flight? To become similar, says Plato, to God. But this will be effected, if we *become just and holy*, in conjunction with *intellectual prudence* and in short if we are truly virtuous."¹ As for the means of such concentration, Plotinus says, closely following Plato, "What machine shall we employ, or what reason consult by means of which we may contemplate this ineffable beauty; a beauty abiding in the most divine sanctuary without ever proceeding from its sacred retreats lest it should be beheld by the profane and vulgar eye?" "We must enter deep into ourselves, and leaving behind the objects of corporeal sight, no longer look back after any of the accustomed spectacles of sense. For it is necessary that whoever beholds this beauty, should withdraw his view from the fairest corporeal forms." "On the contrary, neglecting all these as unequal to the task, and excluding them entirely from our view, having now closed the corporeal eye, we must stir up and assume a purer eye within, which all men possess, but which is alone used by a few."² The exercise of pure intellect is thus the way to the realisation of truth, and the Redcrosse Knight sees the beautiful face of Una with her veil removed only after he has finished his training or purgation on the Mount of Contemplation.

Una symbolises the Supreme Reality of Plato's and Plotinus' Philosophy, sometimes called Truth or Wisdom. (in the Phaedrus).

Though the political and historical significance of Book I. of the *Faerie Queene* is plain and apparent, there is ample evidence to show that this is the moral and philosophic import of the allegory. That Una represents Truth or Wisdom, the object of purely intellectual activity, is explicitly stated by

¹ Plotinus on the Virtues.

² Plotinus—Essay on the Beautiful.

Spenser himself in several places. The stanzas introducing Cantos II and III of Bk. I run thus:—

“The guilefull great Euchaunter parts
The Redcrosse Knight from Truth :
Into whose stead faire falshood steps
And workes him woefull ruth.

.....
Forsaken Truth long seekes her love,
And makes the Lion mylde,” etc.

Truth is the enemy of error and it is Una who warns the Knight against the dangerous cave of Error.—She says:—

“—the *perill of this place*
I better wot then you : though nowe too late
To wish you backe returne with foule disgrace,
Let wisdome warne, whilst foot is in the gate,
To stay the steppe,”

(Bk. I. Ch. I.—13.)

Una is also contrasted with Duessa who stands for falsehood. Una's wisdom is seen in the skill with which she guides Redcrosse throughout the journey. Danger always finds her at his side planning his rescue, and when the Knight is defeated and imprisoned by Orgoglio, Una effects his rescue through Arthur.

“Ay me ! how many perils doe enfold
The righteous man, to make him daily fall,
Were not that heavenly grace doth him uphold,
And stedfast *truth* acquite him out of all.”

(C. VIII.—I.)

Again, when Redcrosse is bent on committing suicide at the instigation of Despair, it is Una's argument that convinces him of his error of judgment. Here also Una is the spirit of Wisdom. Redcrosse falls in danger just when he is deprived of the guidance of Una or Wisdom. The guiles of Duessa overwhelm him only when Una

is not ready at his side with her advice and warning. In Canto VI her wisdom brings the satyrs and the fauns of the forest to her subjection and

“ her gentle wit she plyes
To teach them truth,” .

(C. VI.—19.)

The Spirit of wisdom as she is, her gift to them is Truth.

Truth is characterised by permanence, stability and unity. These are the marks of the beauty of Una. The very name of Una (*i.e.*, one) signifies her character—her unchangeableness and her simplicity. The shifting changes in sensible objects betoken their ephemeral character. Hence Duessa now takes one form and now another. Though she appears beautiful at first, she turns out to be an ugly hag when she is punished by King Arthur.

“ Which when the knights beheld amazed they were,
And wondred at so fowle deformed wight.
“ Such then,” (said Una,) “ as she seemeth here,
Such is the face of falshood: such the sight
Of fowle Duessa, when her borrowed light
Is laid away, and counterfesaunce knowne.”

(Canto VIII.—49.)

In Plato Wisdom is wonderfully beautiful. It is the climax of beauty to which sensible beauty and the beauty of the sciences are mere steps of ascent. It is again the Beauty of which the beautiful objects of the earth are but copies. This is the teaching of the Symposium, the Phaedrus and the Republic.¹ But this beauty of Truth is not visible to the naked eye. The mind only can realise it after it has been purged and purified in the way mentioned

and sometimes called Beauty, (in the Phaedrus). Characteristics of Una's beauty indicate that she stands for the most abstract entity.

¹ Bk. VII.

above. "Of beauty, I repeat again that we saw her there (*i.e.*, in Heaven) shining in company with the celestial forms; and coming to earth we find her here, too, shining in clearness through the clearest aperture of sense. For sight is the keenest of our bodily senses; though not by that is wisdom seen, for her loveliness would have been transporting if there had been a visible image of her, and this is true of the loveliness of other ideas as well."¹ In Spenser Una is supremely beautiful, yet her beauty is not described as an object of visual perception. In fact there is a veil covering her face which is hidden altogether from the Redcrosse Knight. In order to suggest that she possesses wonderful beauty, the poet only refers to the admiration which the forest creatures feel on having a glimpse of her lovely face when the veil is snatched away by Sansloy. Drawn to her presence by her cry for help

"All stand astonied at her beutie bright,"
(C. VI. 9.)

"They, in compassion of her tender youth,
And wonder of her beutie soverayne
Are wonne with pittie and unwonted ruth;
And, all prostrate upon the lowly playne,
Doe kisse her feete, and fawne on her
with count'nance fayne."
(C. VI. 12.)

Sylvanus himself had not seen such beauty.

"And old Sylvanus selfe bethinkes not what
To thinke of wight so fayre, but gazing stood
In doubt to deeme her borne or earthly brood :"
(C. VI. 16.)

The nymphs of the forest are ashamed of their own vaunted beauty when they see Una.

¹ Phaedrus.

"—when they vewed have her heavenly grace,
 They envy her in their malitious mind,
 And fly away for feare of fowle disgrace."

(C. VI-18.)

It is 'noticeable that' the poet does not speak one word about the physical charms of Una ; yet Spenser can, if necessary, give the most detailed description of the graces of a woman. He describes Britomart in this way in Bk. IV and his own love in the Epithalamion. But the Beauty of Truth or Wisdom is Beauty Absolute, and to use ordinary imagery with reference to it would be to circumscribe it and give a wrong impression of it. It is impossible to express in language what transcends thought and idea. Hence Spenser only vaguely hints at the brightness of Una's Beauty and refrains from giving details.

The Redcrosse Knight does not see this Beauty before the day of his marriage with Una, *i.e.*, before his purification is complete. It has already been mentioned that the vision of Truth is the supreme reward of Intellectual training, 'the gathering of the soul within itself.' But the strong Calvinism of Spenser is not satisfied with this one form of purification only ; he therefore subjects the Knight to purification in the mediæval Christian form, consisting of Penance, Remorse and Mortification of the flesh in the House of Holiness. The Knight is put in a dark dungeon, dressed "in sack-cloth and ashes" and made to fast. Corrosives are applied and superfluous rotten flesh is torn off with pincers (C. X.) Though two distinct forms of discipline are undergone by the Knight, Spenser pays more attention to the ascetic form which is described at great length, and it seems as if it is the only method used to purify the Redcrosse Knight. But in Spenser Hellenic culture triumphs over Christian asceticism ; he does not believe that mere asceticism

Purgation undergone by Redcrosse before realising the Supreme Entity is Hellenic as well as Christian.

or mortification of the flesh can bring salvation to man without intellectual training. Hence the vision of the Heavenly Jerusalem is not revealed to the Knight until his schooling in the House of Holiness is supplemented by intellectual training symbolised by his ascent on the Mount of contemplation. The Holy man on the Mount represents intellectual culture and not asceticism though some ascetic and Christian colouring is still discernible in him.

“All were his earthly eien both blunt and bad,
And through great age had lost their kindly sight,
Yet wonderous quick and persaunt was his spright—”

(C. X-47.)

There is another illustration how Spenser prefers the Greek symbol of the attainment of perfection to the Christian. The Heavenly Jerusalem means the same thing in Christian Theology as Truth or Wisdom does in Greek Philosophy. The vision of the Heavenly City and the vision of the beauty of Truth stand for the same thing, *viz.*, the realisation of the Supreme Principle of existence. This is not merely a fancied parallelism, but as a matter of fact the Greek idea was changed into this Christian form by Christian sages with the growth of their religion.¹ Journey to Heavenly Jerusalem forms the basis of many poems and works of art. “Le Pèlerinage de vie

humaine” and Bunyan’s Pilgrim’s Progress are familiar examples. In the first book of the Faerie Queene the Knight has a vision of Heavenly Jerusalem as a result of the two fold purification he undergoes—mortification of

the flesh and contemplation or the abstraction of the soul from the world into itself. But even this Christian

The reward for the purgation too is represented in Hellenic as well as in Christian imagery—marriage with Una and vision of the Holy City.

¹ Encyclopædia Britannica—Article on Christianity.

imagery does not adequately represent the final result of the soul's strifes in the Faërie Queene and Spenser is not satisfied with this form of reward of Redcrosse. Plato and Plotinus had conceived of Truth as Beauty and as an object of Love. The identity of Truth and Beauty has been figured in Una who is consequently an object of love as well. As the supreme reward of intellectual life is not simply an apprehension of Truth but also love of Wisdom, Redcrosse comes down from the Mount of Contemplation and is united to her in wedlock. The veil is removed from her face and the unspeakable effulgence of her beauty flashes upon the knight.

The union of Una and Redcrosse, as painted by Spenser, indicates the influence of Neo-Platonism on the poet, and this is why Holiness in Spenser cannot be regarded as a purely Platonic conception, as has been held by Miss Winstansley and Dr. Harrison.¹ The Neo-Platonist recognises a mode of communion more direct and more intimate than perception or even intellection. In other words, he believes in intuition as a more advanced mode of apprehending Truth. In Plato as well as in Plotinus this is described as *vision*. Again as Truth is altogether unlike the impressions of sense or even the product of intellection, the Neo-Platonist believes that a vision of Truth is not possible for man unless his soul passes through a complete process of purgation as described above and *resembles the spirit* of Truth. When after purgation two similar things come together, *viz.*, the beholder and the object of vision, there is *not comprehension simply but union*. Spenser notes both these aspects of Neo-Platonism. The beauty of Una is revealed to Redcrosse as a glorious vision when her veil is removed.

Influence of Neo-Platonism — Realisation is figured as vision and union.

¹ Platonism in English Poetry, Ch. I. 1.

"The blazing brightnesse of her beauties beame,
And glorious light of her sunshyny face,
To tell were as to strive against the streame:"

(C. XII. 23.)

The other Neo-Platonic idea, *viz.*, that of two becoming one, is figured in their marriage—the Holy *union* of wedlock as it is generally called.

Whatever might be the contribution of Plato to the conception of Holiness, this virtue is more akin to Christian thought and its conception was elaborated by the Christian Church. The mediæval theology gave to it a

Contribution of
Christianity to Spenser's
conception of
Holiness—Calvin's
Institutes of Christian
Religion.

pre-eminence which no other virtue enjoyed and it insisted on mortification of the flesh, penance and abstinence of all sorts as the means of attaining to it.

Spenser was not blind to the good points of the mediæval Church or its theology and it is this mediæval conception of holiness which he illustrates in the austere discipline taught in the House of Holiness. But the austerities, though not the excesses, associated with mediæval practice of Holiness were not uncongenial to the spirit of Calvinism. The 'Institutes' looks upon this virtue as of prime importance in man's life and as the very first condition of his fitness for communion with the Deity. "When mention is made of our union with God, let us remember that holiness must be the bond."¹ Again, "the Scripture system aims chiefly at two objects—the former is that the love of righteousness to which we are by no means naturally inclined, may be instilled and implanted into our minds. The latter is to prescribe a rule which will prevent us while in the pursuit of righteousness from going astray.....With what better foundation can it begin than by reminding us that we

¹ Calvin's Institutes of Christian Religion.

must be holy, because God is holy."¹ It was owing to his strong Calvinism that Spenser dealt with Holiness in the very first book of the *Faerie Queene* and thus gave emphasis and pre-eminence to a virtue which was not even mentioned by Aristotle and, though discussed by Plato, was not elaborated by him in its manifold aspects, being regarded by him more or less as an intellectual attribute.

In order to estimate accurately how far Spenser is indebted to Plato and to Plotinus for his conception of Holiness and Purification, it is necessary to have recourse to a process of elimination and to examine how much of it can be accounted for as due to the direct influence of

Spenser owes his conception of Holiness and Purification not only to Plato and Plotinus, but also to his predecessors, De Guilleville and Hawes. For a correct appreciation of the subject it is necessary to allocate his debts.

the poet's predecessors in the school of Allegory, who had no access to Plato. Like every other poet Spenser learnt much of his art from his masters and their influence can be traced clearly in his imagery, outlook, and *motifs*. The seven Deadly Sins in Bk. I. remind one of Langland, Gower and Chaucer. The pictures of Amor on the arras in Bk. III. (in the House of Busirane) and the lovers' complaint to Venus in the temple of Venus are based on Lydgate's devices.² Purification and purification as preparatory to a state of spiritual elevation was also used as a *motif* in poetry before Spenser. We have to distinguish it from the Platonic idea of purification and to see in what proportion this older poetic *motif* has mingled with Platonic and Neo-Platonic conceptions in the *Faerie Queene*.

Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* is well-known as an allegory of human life in its attempt to attain beatitude through struggle and temptation. The end has to be achieved through a process of purification there. Critics

¹ Journal of English and Germanic Philology, Vol. XIII.

² See the Temple of Glass.

in their search for the source of this allegory have come upon De Guilleville's *Pèlerinage de vie humaine*, written about the middle of the 14th century. Lydgate published an English translation of this work in 1426. This well-known book must have been accessible to Spenser and may have suggested to Spenser the poetic treatment of human life as a continuous march towards the ideal and a continuous purification of the inner self. In the *Pèlerinage* the author describes his dream-journey to Jerusalem under the guidance of Grace Dieu. He had previously a momentary vision of the walls of the Holy city and had seen doctors like St. Benedict and St. Francis advising pilgrims how to enter it (l. 568, 582). This had encouraged him to undertake the journey. Grace Dieu tells him that he is clean only outwardly but is soiled with original sin, and appoints a man to bathe and cleanse him. This sounds exactly like Calvinism as set forth in the stanzas describing the purgation of Redcrosse in the House of Holiness. There is quite an abundance of the feeling of hatred of the flesh whose mortification in the mediæval fashion is so unhesitatingly recommended. Enemies of spiritual culture like Idleness, Cowardice, Avarice and Prodigality confront the pilgrim who puts on an armour which is almost exactly identical with St. Paul's armour put on by Redcrosse, in order to defend himself against them. The helmet of Salvation is there, but the Sword of Righteousness replaces St. Paul's breastplate of righteousness. The pilgrim has many adventures, is surrounded by enchantresses on an island and is rescued by Grace Dieu who makes him take a bath in a cistern called Penance. The final stage of his purification comes off in the castle of Cystews. Here he meets the porter "Dread of God," Charity and Lady Lesson who bear considerable resemblance to Humility, Mercie and Charissa in the House of Holiness. The

teaching of Lady Lesson is to the pilgrim what Charissa's teaching is to Redcrosse. The pilgrim, however, does not reach the end of his journey. He sees the wicket of the Heavenly City but before he can reach it, he is rendered decrepit by Infirmary, old Age and Sickness and is carried away by Death.

The work is very crude and cannot obviously compare with the artistic production of Spenser. It was evidently meant to be a handbook of religious instruction and hence it is full of moralisings and sermons. The theological speeches add to the length of the book as well as to its utter formlessness. But beneath all this loose, floating and shapeless mass there runs the undercurrent of the idea of purgation, and it is this, together with the goal of final purification (*viz.*, entrance into Jerusalem) to which it points, that gives some kind of unity to these 25,000 lines of archaic poetry. It is this idea that links it with the first book of Spenser's poem; for, apart from the fact that the killing of the Dragon by Redcrosse and his union with Una, allegorise this idea of reaching moral perfection through purification, the vision of the Heavenly Jerusalem from the Mount of contemplation is also to be regarded as the happy result of purification undergone by Redcrosse in the House of Holiness (though it is also the effect of training on the Mount). But De Guilleville's differences with Spenser are many. The most obvious difference is that the Faerie Queene is a romance of chivalry and the Pèlerinage like the Pilgrim's Progress is a religious allegory. What is more pertinent

De Guilleville deals with the ascetic (and Christian) aspect of purification

to the present enquiry is that the Pèlerinage deals with the ascetic aspect of purification; it has got nothing to do with intellectual culture, "the gathering up of the soul into itself," as Plato and Plotinus would say. Spenser is indebted to this poem for his

literary treatment of the mediæval and ascetic idea of purgation. The teaching of the Pèlerinage is that it is by mortification of the flesh that the soul acquires the capacity of entering the Heavenly Jerusalem. This is also the kind of lesson inculcated in the House of Holiness. Yet Spenser's Platonism and mysticism create a difference even here. Spenser conceives the final goal as vision of the Heavenly city while the Pilgrim's aim is to enter it. The meaning of Spenser's allegory is that penance is a means of realising inward bliss while the Pèlerinage teaches that asceticism actually transplants the pilgrim's soul to high Heaven.

It has been mentioned that in Spenser two forms of purification have been blended together—the mediæval and the classical. The mediæval form of purification can be traced to De Guilleville as has just been seen, but for the other form Spenser cannot be said to have been actually indebted to any of his predecessors, though some faint suggestion of it may have come from Stephen Hawes whose *Pastime of Pleasure* had an enormous influence on the *Faerie Queene*. Mrs. Browning¹ says that the *Pastime of Pleasure* is one of 'the four columnar marbles on whose foundation is exalted into light the great allegorical poem of the world, Spenser's *Faerie Queene*.' (The three other columns being *Piers Plowman*, the *Temple of Glass* and the *House of Fame*.) On the other hand, Professor Saintsbury suggests that Hawes exercised very little influence on Spenser's Allegory. Whatever may be the nature and extent of Hawes' influence on Spenser's allegorical method generally, it is not difficult to see how far Spenser was indebted to Hawes for this *motif* of purification in the first Book of *Faerie Queene*.

In form the *Pastime of Pleasure* differs from the *Pèlerinage* and resembles the *Faerie Queene*, being a

¹ In her "Greek Christian Poets and English Poets."

narrative of chivalric adventure. In both the hero is rewarded with the hand of a lady at the close of his adventure. Graund Amour, the hero of Hawes' poem, finds himself one day at the crossing of two ways—one 'the straight way of contemplation' and the other 'the way of worldly dignity' leading to the 'tower of fayre dame Beautye,' La Bell Pucell. The hero chooses the latter and is directed by Fame to the tower of Doctrine where he receives instruction in Trivium and Quadrivium. He meets La Bell Pucell in the Tower of Music where she agrees to receive him as her lord if he should be able to kill the Dragons guarding her paternal residence. Graund Amour prepares himself for the adventure by receiving his Knighthood in the Tower of chivalry. During his journey he meets False Report *alias* Godfrey Gobilive whose business is to alienate lovers. He designs to count Graund Amour too among his victims but is arrested and taken for punishment to the House of Correction. The hero pays a visit to this House and sees with his own eyes the punishments meted out to those who spread false report against lovers or are not true in love. Proceeding farther, he kills two giants and marries La Bell Pucell.

It will be seen that this story of chivalric adventure has also a subtler meaning. It is an allegory of the progress of the soul in its striving for moral perfection.

Hawes depicts moral and intellectual purification, though crudely, in his Pastyme of Pleasure.

The idea of purification is also present here. Hawes' conception of purification is, however, more advanced than

De Guilleville's and what Graund Amour undergoes is not the purification of the body—the mortification and torturing of the flesh—but an inner discipline of the soul. Distinct acts of purification are typified by the different adventures undertaken by Graund Amour and it is through these that the different stages

of the soul's progress are reached. The enemies overcome by him are states of mind which betoken moral obliquity and in which true love can have no existence. Overcoming these enemies means the purgation of the soul cleansing it of moral turpitude—jealousy, falsehood, etc. The offenders against the code of love punished in the House of Correction personify moral evils and the heads of the two giants killed by the hero bear names which signify enmity against the ideal of moral purity. The heads of the first giant are labelled Falshed, Ymagination, Perjury and on those of the second are written Dissimulation, Delay and names of other similar vices.

The discipline here portrayed by Hawes bears some resemblance to purgation as understood by Plato and Plotinus because both are internal and differ from the physical hardships insisted on by asceticism. Yet the discipline which Redcrosse had to undergo on the Mount of Contemplation, though it is more akin to Hawes' conception than to De Guilleville's, can hardly be said to be the product of Hawes' influence. Moral purity is the ideal in Hawes while Spenser lays stress on intellectual culture. Spenser's idea is strictly Platonic and Hawes, to whom Plato was probably unknown except in name, was surely not a lover of Absolute Truth and was most probably ignorant of such a philosophic notion. Love generated in the purified soul in Hawes would not be love of Truth or Wisdom which to Hawes was unintelligible. Even the ideal human love which may be regarded as the perfection of *moral virtue* (as distinct from intellectual virtue) is absent from Hawes' poem. His work is crude and his art is immature and unable to deal with deep and profound conceptions. La Bell Pucell is too much of a creature of the flesh. She is not like Una who remains veiled all through her journey and guides Redcrosse in times of danger and difficulty. While

Spenser describes the union of Una and Redcrosse in vague and delicate language, Hawes is frankly realistic in depicting the meeting of his hero and Pucell. Graund Amour says:—

“ I dyd my duty, and ones or twyse ywys
Her lyppes soft I did full swetely kyss.”

The training received by Graund Amour prior to his setting out on the adventure which was to win for him the hand of the lady is, however, purely intellectual. It is not such a training as would be recommended by a Court of love for any love-sick soul; on the contrary, mental gymnastics such as a study of Trivium and Quadrivium involved was considered in the mediæval times to be the best preparation for a life of contemplation, study and culture. It was necessary only for those whose aim was knowledge and a higher life of self-realisation attainable through it. Indeed the poet himself makes his meaning quite clear. Of the sciences he says that they

“ Ledeth the soule the way in specyall
By good doctrine to dame Eternite—”

Again,

The VII seyences in one monacorde,
Eche upon other do full well depende;
Musyke hath them so set in concorde,
That all in one may right well extende.
All perfite reason they do so comprehende,
That theyr waye and perfite doctryne
To the joye above, whiche is celestine.”

(Pastime of Pleasure, Ch. XVI.)

Thus Hawes seems to have had a hazy notion of the intellectual discipline which leads to an apprehension of Truth or Wisdom. He could not recognise Abstract Truth as the end of human effort, and his Christian training makes him think of the goal of human existence as moral purity. He accordingly mixes up the conceptions of Wisdom and Morality. The seven

sciences "set in concord" by Music are said to illustrate the beauty of perfect Reason which leads to intellectual edification. But the knighthood conferred on Graund Amour is a spiritual distinction and is in itself a recognition of Moral Purity and not Truth as an object of human striving. The 'armour put on' by the knight is just what Spenser in his letter to Raleigh provides for Redcrosse—the armour of St. Paul.

"For fyrst, good hope his legges harneys sholde be,
His habergion of perfyte ryght wysenes;
Gyrde faste wyth the gyrdle of chastite

.....
His helmet mekenes, and the shelde good fayth;
His swerde Goddes worde, as saynt Poule sayth."

(P. of Pl. Ch. XXVII.)

The influence of Hawes' Pastime of Pleasure on Spenser's conception of purification in Bk. I is thus clear. Hawes' work mixes up two ideas of purification and of these the idea of moral purification has some distinctness and fullness. This has sometimes a Christian colouring and sometimes its principle is sought to be

But Platonism accounts for the clear intellectual note in Spenser's allegory.

realised in chivalric love. The idea of intellectual purification leading to the vision of Truth is very crude. Spenser was certainly influenced by Hawes' literary treatment of the theme of purification in general, but his clear and distinct conception of intellectual purgation as consisting of contemplation and "withdrawing of the soul into herself" is derived from Plato and Plotinus. It is also his Platonism that accounts for his representation of Truth as a beautiful lady attracting the admiration and love of beholders. The influence of the mysticism of Plotinus and also of Plato is again discernible in the vision of the lady's beauty which constitutes the final reward of the war-worn knight, for vision is the famous symbol of spiritual communion in the works of both these philosophers.

CHAPTER VIII

ÆSTHETIC THEORIES—FICINUS, PICO AND BENIVIENTI, THE ITALIAN NEO-PLATONISTS

Plato has no æsthetic theories in the modern sense of the term. He has not attempted to define Beauty as an independent reality or to formulate its laws. It is true that he appreciates sensuous beauty but he finally identifies it with the Good and Truth and disposes of physical Beauty as their copy and reflection. Plato values form not for its æsthetic significance but owing to its antagonism with matter and because it proceeds from Intellect which alone is Good and Beautiful, Art too is valued

Plato had no æsthetic theory, properly so called. Beauty meant Good in Plato's Philosophy

by Plato in so far as it has a moral purpose and its function is educational. "Art for art's sake" is a doctrine the truth of which Plato would have found it difficult to recognise. Beauty as such was not to him a thing "of joy for ever."

Plotinus too follows Plato's theory of Beauty and explains physical beauty as derived through Intellect from the Good. He, however, takes more pains to study it and explains its derivation from Intellect. His point of view is the same as Plato's as is his conclusion. The Platonists of the Renaissance who studied Plato through his Alexandrian follower, accepted without protest Plato's identification of Beauty and the Good, which is sown broadcast in all the manuals of Platonism which appeared in Italy in the 15th and 16th centuries. Spenser closely

Plotinus and the Italian Neo Platonists followed Plato. Spenser derives his ideas on beauty from Plato as well as from his followers and commentators

follows the Alexandrian and the Italian Neo-Platonists' theory of Beauty which, based as it was on Plato, contained copious elaborations.

Spenser in his "Hymne in Honour of Beautie" proceeds first to account for the beauty of the external world and next to explain human beauty. His theory that material things are beautiful because they have been created by God¹ according to the Pattern of perfect

Beauty in the physical world is received from the Pattern, through God. This is Plato's theory in the Timaeus.

Beauty which pours its influence on them and irradiates them, is a blend of Plato and Plotinus. The idea that the world was modelled by God on a beautiful Pattern is taken from Plato.²

In the Timaeus Plato says, regarding the creation of the world by God, "The work of the creator whenever he looks to the unchangeable and fashions the form and nature of his work after an *unchangeable pattern*, must necessarily be made fair and perfect." Again, "Which of the patterns had the artificer in view when he made the world,—the pattern of the unchangeable, or of that which is created?.....the world has been framed in the likeness of that which is apprehended by reason and mind and is unchangeable." Spenser differs from Plato in that he identifies the Pattern with Abstract or Perfect Beauty, while in the Timaeus it is only described as fair and eternal.

"That wondrous Paterne, wheresoere it bee,
...
Is perfect Beautie, which all men adore;
Whose face and feature doth so much excell
All mortall sence, that none the same may tell."

(H.B. St. 6.)

The distinction is not very important and Spenser's departure from the Timaeus may be due to the position

¹ Hymne in Honour of Beautie, St. 6-7.

² See Chapter VI.

ascribed to Beauty in the Symposium as the supreme and eternal Reality.

In the Timaeus, however, no mention is made of any ray or influence issuing out of the Pattern and irradiating dull matter. But ideas in the Timaeus are conflicting. In one place the world's beauty is represented as a beauty of design borrowed from the Pattern on which it is modelled. In another place it is said to be due to God who bestows on it soul and intelligence. Though no mention is made of the "influence" of Beauty into matter, the dependence of Beauty on the non-material qualities of order and intelligence is suggested even in these remarks. "Finding the whole visible sphere not at rest, but moving in an irregular and disorderly fashion, out of disorder he (the Creator) brought order, considering that this was in every way better than the other. Now the deeds of the best could never be or have been other than the fairest; and the Creator reflecting on the things which are by nature visible, found that no unintelligent creature taken as a whole was fairer than the intelligent taken as a whole; and that intelligence could not be present in anything which was void of soul. For which Reason when he was framing the Universe he put intelligence in soul and soul in body, that he might be the creator of a work which was by nature fairest and best. Wherefore using the language of probability, we may say that the world became a living creature truly endowed with soul and intelligence by the providence of God." Here form and intelligence which give beauty to the world are said to be the gift of God who, before imparting intelligence or beauty to it, creates the frame of the world out of the chaos. Spenser however holds that it is the influence of beauty that produces order in matter and evolves the world from the gross chaos. This aesthetic theory of Spenser has at its bottom the metaphysical

doctrine that corporeality is the result of the accession of form into matter and is impossible without it.¹ In fact Spenser's Aesthetics is but another aspect of his Metaphysics, since in the Neo-Platonic system of Philosophy beauty is the irradiation of form. The real source of this idea, as will be seen later on, is Plotinus. The Symposium and the Phædrus try to give a more developed theory than the Timæus, which is fully worked out in Plotinus' Essay on the Beautiful.

In the Symposium the source of sensible beauty is laid in Absolute Beauty which is the last of a long series of beautiful objects. It is "Beauty only, absolute, separate, simple, and everlasting which, without diminution and without increase or any change, is imparted to the evergrowing and perishing beauties of all other things." Again, in the Phædo Socrates says, "I am

The Symposium describes the source as Absolute Beauty, not as Pattern.

assured in my own mind that nothing makes a thing beautiful but the presence and participation of beauty in whatever way or manner obtained; for as to the manner I am uncertain, but I stoutly contend that by beauty all beautiful things become beautiful." How

The Phædrus speaks of the process of derivation of beauty as infusion or effluence.

beauty is imparted to matter is not mentioned by Plato in the Phædo or in the Symposium. The Phædrus gives some idea

of the process of derivation of beauty from the original source, which is described as *effluence* or the flowing in of beauty. Referring to the change which comes upon the lover's soul when it beholds the beauty of the beloved after a long separation, Plato says, "As he (*i.e.*, the soul) receives the *effluence of beauty* through the eyes, the wing moistens and he warms. As he warms, the parts out of which the wing grew, and which had been hitherto

¹ See Chapter VI.

close and rigid, and had prevented the wing from shooting forth are melted and as nourishment streams upon him, the lower end of the wing begins to swell and grow from the root upwards extending under the whole soul."¹ Again, referring to the meeting of lovers, their approaches and embraces, *e.g.*, in the case of Zeus and Ganymede, Plato speaks of "*the stream of beauty, passing the eyes* which are the natural doors and windows of the soul, return again to the beautiful one; there arriving and fluttering the passages of the wings, and watering them and inclining them to grow, and filling the soul of the beloved also with love."¹ The growth of the wings of the soul means simply that the soul is enabled to have communion with Beauty Absolute. This is impossible unless the soul also becomes beautiful, for communion takes place only between the likes. The streaming in of beauty thus serves to infuse beauty into the soul.

Plotinus gives a more complete theory about the infusion of beauty into matter. Matter, according to Plotinus, is formless, incorporeal and chaotic. Reasoning power has no perception of it except as indefiniteness. It can have no magnitude or bulk. But "it should have indeed the phantasm of bulk, because as being the first matter it is an aptitude to the reception of it. It is, however, a void bulk.....The indefiniteness of it, likewise, is a bulk of this kind." Into what is called the "void bulk" which according to ordinary imagery would be crevices or fissures in a material object, the so-called particles of beauty find a lodging, and these then irradiate, beautify or rationalise matter or combine its parts into one complete whole. "It is by participation of species that we call every

Plotinus develops the theory of infusion and asserts that particles from Absolute Beauty lodge in 'void bulk' and thus impart beauty to it.

¹ Phædrus

sensible object beautiful. . . . Whatever is remote from this immortal source is perfectly base and deformed. And such is matter, which by its nature is ever averse from the *supervening irradiations of form*. Whenever, therefore, form accedes it conciliates* in amicable unity the parts which are about to compose a whole; for being itself one, it is not wonderful that the subject of its power *should tend to unity*, as far as the nature of a compound will admit. Hence beauty is established in multitude when the many is reduced into one.”¹ Physical beauty, therefore, is produced by the rays of Absolute Beauty lodging in the interstices of matter and unifying the parts into one complete whole. This is the view of Spenser also. Referring to the Pattern he says :—

Spenser follows Plotinus.

“Thereof as every earthly thing partakes
Or more or lesse, by influence divine,
So it more faire accordingly it makes,

.....

✓ —through infusion of celestiaall powre,
The duller earth it quickneth with delight,
And life-full spirits privily doth powre
Through all the parts, that to the lookers sight
They seeme to please ;”

(Hymne in honour of Beautie, St. 7-8.)

The figure used by Plotinus to explain the effluence of Beauty into matter is also retained by Spenser. Plotinus always describes Beauty as the sun and its effluence as the rays of the sun. Spenser speaks of the Pattern as the “lamp” or the “sun” and its influence as its “beam.”²

✓ The next question discussed by Spenser is human beauty. Here he receives little light from Plato and is

¹ Plotinus—*Essay on the Beautiful*.

- H. B., St 9, 15.

indebted mostly to Plotinus, Ficinus and Pico. (In reality the theory of human beauty in Plotinus is the same as that of ordinary physical beauty as set forth above.

Ficinus and Pico teach that human beauty is received from the soul and is not due to fair complexion, form and proportion. Spenser holds the same view.

Both depend on the form or intelligence embedded in the beautiful object. In the case of a human being, however, the influence of beauty reaches the body through the agency of the soul, while ordinarily the rays of beauty are lodged directly in the pores in material objects). Spenser at the very outset mocks at the vulgar idea of beauty, *viz.*, that it is a product of mere colour and comeliness of form.

"How vainely then doe ydle wits invent,
That beantie is nought else but mixture made
Of colours faire, and goodly temp'rament
Of pure complexions, that shall quickly fade ✓
And passe away, like to a sommers shade;
Or that it is but comely composition
Of parts well measured, with meet disposition!"

.(II. B. St. 10.)

This is taken almost verbatim from Plotinus. "It is the general opinion that a certain commensuration of parts to each other, and to the whole, with the addition of colour, generates that beauty which is the object of sight; and that in the commensurate and moderate alone the beauty of every thing consists."¹ Pico is equally emphatic in his opposition to the popular notion of Beauty. He expresses it almost in the words of Ficinus, only to controvert it and expose its untenable character. "Corporeal Beauty implies, first the material disposition of the Body, consisting of quantity in the proportion and distance of parts, of quality in figure and colour: secondly, a certain quality which

¹ Essay on the Beautiful, tr. Thomas Taylor

cannot be expressed by any term better than Gracefulness, shining in all that is fair. This is properly Venus, Beauty, which kindles the fire of Love in Mankind: they who affirm it results from the disposition of the Body, the sight, figure, and colour of features, are easily confuted by experience. We see many persons exact, and unaccusable in every part, destitute of this grace, and comeliness; others less perfect in those particular conditions, excellently graceful and comely..... This, then, *must by consequence be ascribed to the soul.*"¹

Spenser's point is that colour and symmetry, however, excellent, cannot excite in us that sentiment which the sight of a beautiful human face kindles. The passion of love can only be explained on the theory that the beauty which excites it in the lover's mind is something akin to the mind or soul to which its appeal lies. Such a theory, therefore, would also hold that human beauty is but the manifestation of the beautiful soul. Following Pico, Spenser in fact propounds such a theory and he explains what constitutes beauty in the soul. According to Spenser the soul is derived from 'Immortal Beauty or God and receives its beauty also from that source. Like the rays of Beauty from the Pattern the soul has the power to impress its beauty on body, and according as a soul is good or bad—and a soul is good in proportion as it is emancipated from the thralldom of sense and rendered akin to Intellect or to God—it shapes for itself a fair or ugly body. Hence unchastity and vice in men and women, which are antagonistic to Intellect, spoil their beauty as true love and temperance refine it. On the beauty of the soul derived from God Plotinus, after expatiating on the nature and value of Temperance, Fortitude, Magnanimity, says this:—"The soul, thus defined, i.e., as ornamented with these virtues, becomes form and reason,

¹ Pico—Commentary on, St. VI., VII., VIII.,

is altogether incorporeal and intellectual, and wholly participates of that divine nature, which is the fountain of loveliness, and of whatever is allied to the beautiful and fair. *Hence the soul reduced to intellect becomes astonishingly beautiful*Intellect, and whatever emanates from intellect, is not the foreign, but the proper ornament of the soul, for the being of the soul, when absorbed in intellect, is then alone real and true. It is, therefore, rightly said that the beauty and good of the soul consists in her *similitude to the Deity; for from hence flows all her beauty.*" (Essay on the Beautiful.) This idea is thus expressed by Spenser :—

"For when the soule, the *which derived was,*
At first, out of that great unworldly Spright,
 By whom all live to love, whilome did pas
 Downe from the top of purest heavens hight
 To be embodied here, it then tooke light
 And lively spirits from the fayrest starre
 Which lights the world forth from his fire carre."

(Hymne in honour of Beautie, St. 16.)

About the influence of the soul on the body and the fashioning of the body according to the quality of the soul, Plotinus says, "Bodies themselves participate of beauty from the soul which, as something divine, and a portion of the beautiful itself renders whatever it supervenes and subdues, beautiful as far as its natural capacity will admit."¹ Plotinus does not mention the actual process of the soul's tempering the body, but Spenser recollects the process of accession of form into matter and applies the idea to the working of the soul which is represented as filling up every pore of the body and thus beautifying it. Here he also draws upon Ficinus. According to the Cambridge History of English Literature, Spenser "imitates the Italian in describing the descent of the soul

¹ Essay on the Beautiful.

from heaven to form the body, the correspondence between the beautiful soul and 'the beautiful body and the reason why a beautiful soul sometimes forms an ugly body.'¹ The ideas of Plotinus and

Spenser describes after Ficinus and Pico how the soul leaves its heavenly home, is joined to the body and transforms it by its own formative energy.

Ficinus are elaborated by Pico. * The belief that human beauty is due to the quality of the soul is held also by Pico. He explains at length the manner in which it is communicated. According to him God scatters souls on the planets—"some in the Moon, others in other planets and stars." The nature of the soul varies according to the planet on which it is cast. "Platonists affirm some souls are of the nature of Saturn, others of Jupiter, or some other planet; meaning one soul hath more conformity in its Nature with the soul of the Heaven of Saturn than with that of Jupiter, and so on the contrary." The souls come down from the planets and are linked to different bodies to which they impart their own beauty as well as their nature. Hence from the look of a man it is possible to determine his morals and his temper. "Many imagine the Rational Soul descending from her star, in her 'Vehiculum cœleste,' of her self form the Body, to which by that medium she is united. Our author upon these grounds supposeth, that into the 'Vehiculum' of the soul, by her endued with Power to form the Body, is infused from her Star a particular formative virtue, distinct according to that Star; thus the aspect of one is saturnine, of another jovial, etc. In their looks we read the nature of their souls."² As to the exact manner of transference of beauty, Pico says, "This (human beauty) then must by consequence be ascribed to the Soul; which when perfect and lucid, transfuseth even into the body

¹ Vol. III.

² Pico—Commentary on St. VI.

some beams of its splendour." The planetary home¹ of the soul, its descent into the body² and the irradiation of dull matter by it—all these theories find a place in Spenser's poetry. Describing the process of the soul's action on the body, Spenser says :—

"When she in fleshly seede is eft enraced,
Through every part she doth the same impresse,
According as the heavens have her graced,
And frames her house, in which he will be placed,
Fit for her selfe, adorning it with spoyle
Of th' heavenly riches which she robd ere-whyle."*

(H. B. St. 17.)

"Thereof it comes that these faire soules, which have
The most resemblance of that heavenly light,
Frame to themselves most beautifull and brave
Their fleshly bowre, most fit for their delight,
And the grosse matter by a sovaine might
Tempers so trim, that it may well be seene
A pallace fit for such a virgin Queene."

(H. B. St. 18.)

From the theory that the formative energy of the soul shapes for it a body equal to it in beauty, Spenser arrives at the broad generalisation—which in reality is the converse of the foregoing proposition—that a beautiful person has always a virtuous soul and beauty is the index of noble ancestry.

Beautiful body is
always animated by
beautiful soul, though
there are exceptions.

"For all that faire is, is by nature good ;
That is a signe to know the gentle blood."

(H. B. St. 20.)

To those who protest against such a sweeping remark and point their finger at handsome men given to vice and

¹ H. B. St. 15.

² H. B. St. 16.

sin, Spenser's reply is that matter is not always amenable to the discipline of the soul.

"Yet oft it falles that many a gentle mynd
Dwels in deformed tabernacle drownd,
Either by chaunce, against the coturse of kynd,
Or through *unaptnesse in the substance found*,
Which it assumed of *some stubborn grownd*,
That will not yield unto her formes direction ;"

(H. B. St. 21.)

This passage echoes the idea of Ficinus who in commenting on Plotinus' Discourse on Love says, "She (*beauty as seen in physical objects*) keeps constantly ready to inform and adorn with wonderful effect the shapelessness of matter. If anything hideous, therefore, occurs in nature, it occurs against that first intention of God and of Nature, just as when any thing distorted is produced in an artist's studio, it is produced against the artist's intention."¹

This theory of Ficinus is traceable in his disciple Pico and in Benivieni whose Ode of Love is full of Neo-Platonism. The idea that the soul frames the body according to her own nature and attributes, and that matter sometimes rebels against her and frustrates her design, is embodied in the following lines of Benivieni :—

"—now as she may
With instruments like hers, in human clay
She frames her house ; and that must mould and form
Which thwarts now more, now less, her high designs."

(St. VI. Ode of Love.)

Pico's comments on these lines run thus : "In their (men's) looks we reade the nature of their souls. But because inferiour Matter is not ever obedient to the

¹ Plotini Divini illius c̄ Platonica familia Philosophi De rebus Philosophicis libri LIIII. Basilen, M.D., LIX.

Stamp, the vertue of the Soul is not always equally exprest in the visible effigies; hence it happens that two of the same Nature are unlike; the Matter whereof the one consists, being lesse disposed to receive that Figure than the other.; what in that is compleat is in this imperfect."¹

Spenser now comes to deal with a most important question, a question which in its practical bearing must have had an immense interest for the nobles and the ladies as well as for the common folk of the Renaissance. This is the effect of Love on Beauty. The way in which the soul affects the body has already been dealt with. It has also been seen how the soul becomes beautiful and how the soul's beauty is imparted to the body. A deformed soul imparts its deformity to the body. But what is a deformed soul? Plotinus' reply is given in these sentences. "Let us suppose a soul deformed to be one intemperate and unjust, filled with a multitude of desires..... Solely employed in the thought of what is immoral and low, bound in the fetters of impure delights, living the life, whatever it may be, peculiar to the passion of body; and so totally merged in sensuality as to esteem the base pleasant, and the deformed beautiful and fair." (Essay on the Beautiful.) Spenser tells the "faire Dames" what causes the soul's deformity:—

"Loath that foule blot, that hellish fierbrand,
Disloyall lust faire beauties foulest olame,
 That base affections, which your eares would bland
 Commend to you by loves abused name,
 But is indeede the bondslave of defame;"

(H. B. St. 25).

And what is the beauty of the soul that irradiates and brightens the body? After the poetical amorists of the

¹ Pice's Discourse, Book III.

Renaissance, Spenser answers that it is just the reverse of this "foul blot," this "disloiall lust." In a previous paragraph the beauty of the soul has been seen to consist in its absorption in intellect or, as the quotation from Plotinus has it, in its "similitude to the Deity." But this is transcendentalism and abstraction carried to excess. It represents an aspect of human perfection which is never attractive. It encourages only the cultivation of the intellect and the desire for the realisation of Beauty Absolute, Truth or Sapience, celebrated in the Hymn to Heavenly Beauty. But here the reference is not to that intellectualism, that training in dialectic which enables the human soul to look beyond the tangible and the palpable but to love—noble love not purged of human connections but intensely human. It is Love as mentioned in the speech of Rhaedrus in the Symposium and as glorified by Spenser in Book III, of the Faerie Queene.¹ It is this love on which the amorists of the Renaissance and the apostles of culture in Italy had laid so much stress as a prominent characteristic of the courtier and the gentleman. Castiglione and other writers of the Italian courtesy-books of the 15th century had mentioned it as a high accomplishment in an educated man. Love such as this is an ornament of the soul and the refined soul that possesses it has its effect on physical beauty.

"But gentle Love that loiall is and trew,
Will more illumine your resplendent ray,
And adde more brightnesse to your goodly hew,
From light of his pure fire ;

.....
Therefore, to make your beantie more appeare,

¹ See Chapter IV.

*It you behoves to love, and forth to lay
 That heavenly riches which in you ye beare,
 That men the more admyre their fountaine may;
 For else what booteth that celestiall ray,
 If it in darknesse be enshrined ever,
 That it of loving eyes be vewed never?"*

(H. B. St. 26-27).

✓ Love and Beauty go hand in hand in Plato as well as in Spenser. A discussion of the nature of love necessarily arises out of an inquiry into the nature of Beauty. The effect of love on physical beauty has already been determined. But what is Love

Analysis of the conception of love;

itself? Spenser gives two answers to the question and for both these answers he is indebted to Plato. He describes Love as a cosmogonic principle which unites the chaotic elements in a bond of harmony (H. L. St. 12) and helps on the creation of the world.¹ Its influence extends to all living creatures whose health depends on the harmonious blending of the humours in their body.² The source of this idea is,

it is (1) a cosmogonic principle, (2) a desire for procreation, in all animals, (3) desire for beauty perceived before birth.

as already seen, the speech of Eryximachus in the Symposium. But Spenser superimposes his own fancy on this notion and imagines Cupid or the God of Love as imparting warmth to the barren cold of chaos. It is this heat that leads to procreation which, again, is a means of getting rid of the "flame." This aspect of Love is described by Spenser as Lust which is imputed to inanimate nature and to beasts. Human Love, though it is conducive to generation and perpetuation of the species, is differentiated from it by Spenser according to whom man seeks to be immortal through his issue but beasts have no such aim.

¹ See Chapter V.

² H. L. St. 13—l. 6-7.

"Whilest they seeke onely, without further care,
 To quench the flame which they in burning fynd;
 But man that breathes a more immortall mynd,
 Not for lusts sake, but for eternitie,
 Seekes to enlarge his lasting progenie;"

(H. L. St. 15.)

The assumption made here is not authorised by Plato who ascribes love of issue and solicitude for their preservation both to man and beast, and puts man and beast in the same category so far as their desire for propagation is concerned. "See you not how all animals, birds as well as beasts in their desire of procreation, are in agony when they take the infection of love; this begins with the desire of union to which is added the care of offspring, on behalf of whom the weakest are ready to battle against the strongest even to the uttermost, and to die for them. ... Man may be supposed to do this from reason; but why should animals have these passionate feelings?"¹ Diotima continues: "Marvel not at this, if you believe that love is of the immortal, as we have already admitted; for here again, and on the same principle too, mortal nature is seeking as far as possible to be everlasting and immortal: and this is only to be attained by generation, because the new is always left in the place of old."¹

Spenser tries further to differentiate human Love from the lust of beasts, and the mark of love mentioned by him is in this case taken from Plato. Beauty lies at the root of love and man's attraction for beautiful woman is traceable to his recollection of Absolute Beauty perceived in the other world. By loving woman he only tries to possess a faint shadow of it

¹ Symposium.

and by begetting issue he tries to perpetuate it. Diotima says, "Love is only birth in beauty, whether of body or of soul.....There is a certain age at which human nature is desirous of procreation; and this procreation must be in beauty and not in deformity." But beasts do not appreciate beauty. Spenser says:—

Spenser following Ficinus ascribes two conflicting desires to man.

"For, having yet in his deducted spright
Some sparks remaining of that heavenly fyre,
He is enlumined with that goodly light,
Unto like goodly semblant to aspyre;
Therefore in choice of love he doth desyre
That seemes on earth most heavenly to embrace,
That same is Beautie, borne of heavenly race.
For sure of all that in this mortall frame
Contained is, nought more divine doth seeme,
Or that resembleth more th' immortall flame
Of heavenly light, then Beauties glorious beame."
(H. L. St. 16-17.)

The way in which Spenser attributes two seemingly opposing motives to man, *viz.*, the desire of propagation and a longing for the possession of beauty, has a sanction in Ficinus also. "Those who love the beautiful bodies not for the sake of gratification but for the fact that they are beautiful, are lovers. Further, those who desire mixed love as towards woman, by which perpetuity of generation is preserved and never wander from this, *desire both beauty and perpetuity*; and they both are temperate."¹

The conception of human beauty as being derived from the divine or heavenly beauty really accounts for the exalted notion which the lover has of the beloved. Spenser says the true lover does not simply carry an image of the person of his

¹ Plotini Divini illius è Platonica familia Philosophi De rebus Philosophicis libri LIIII. Basilea, M.D. LIX.

beloved in his mind, but he strips it of all earthly and fleshly associations—colour, form, stature—and thus creates an idea which is beyond ordinary visual perception. This idea of the beloved has an affinity with the soul of the lover and it is his soul that communes with it and feels an unspeakable joy at this communion.)

The formation of an Idea of the beloved is a conception for which Spenser is indebted to the Italian Platonists—Pico, Benivieni and Castiglione. The Cortegiano

Six grades of love in the Cortegiano, each purer than the one immediately below it.

gives six distinct stages of the progress of the ideal lover, from the moment when he feels the promptings of love at the sight of a beautiful face till

the time when his soul views the wide sea of pure divine beauty. ¹ First of all, the lover beholds a beautiful woman

and loves her. ² Then, to alleviate the distress of separation, he impresses her fair image upon his mind.

Straightway, however, his imagination idealises the face and she appears to his mind fairer than she really is. In the second stage it is this idealised face that the lover loves.

But once bent on the quest of beauty, the true lover knows no stay. So stimulated by this idealised beauty of the lady, he comes to form an image of a face which is, as it were, the sum of all loveliness, a combination of selected charms. In the language of Castiglione, "Besides these blessings (of beholding the idealised face) the lover will find another much greater still, if he will employ this love as a step to mount to one much higher, which he will succeed in doing if he continually consider within himself how narrow a restraint it is to be always occupied in contemplating the beauty of one body only; and therefore, in order to escape such close bonds as these, in his thought he will little by little add so many ornaments that by heaping all beauties together he will form a universal concept and will reduce the multitude of these

beauties to the unity of that single beauty which is spread over human nature at large. In this way he will no longer contemplate the particular beauty of one woman, but the universal beauty which adorns all bodies."¹ When the lover is fully aware that this concept of universal beauty is primarily the product of his own mind, he realises that beauty must be an inherent part of the soul, and the passion for beauty "growing with each fresh activity of the spirit, he now joyously contemplates beauty as he finds it within himself, quite unembarrassed by any remembrance of the senses." Castiglione says, "Then the soul devoted to the contemplation of her own substance as if awakened from deepest sleep opened those eyes which all possess but few use, and sees in herself a ray of that light which is the true image of that angelic beauty communicated to her .. Now the same impulse which hitherto inclined the lover to universalise the beauty of women, compells him to universalise that abstract beauty which he discovers within himself, and he feels out after and discovers that encircling, all-inclusive beauty of which he had before recognized but partial and subordinate manifestations. No longer does the soul contemplate beauty in her own particular intellect but she looks forth, enraptured and ravished by its splendor, upon the vast sea of universal beauty. Last stage of all, the soul burning with the sacred fire of true love and yearning to unite herself with so great beauty, actually becomes identified therewith, incorporate in the life of God."² Beauty of a single woman, idealisation of this beauty, universal beauty of womankind, beauty as an attribute of the mind, intelligible beauty as an absolute reality, beauty of God—these are the six stages in Castiglione.

¹ Bl. IV of the Cortegiano

² *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, Vol. 13, p 418

This sort of gradation of beauty is found also in the Hymns of Spenser. It has accordingly been suggested by a writer in the *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* (Vol. XIII) that Spenser is the debtor of Castiglione. But Pico writing earlier than Castiglione had classified beauty into six grades which closely resemble the six stages in Castiglione. Pico wrote by the way of commenting on the Sonnet of Benivieni and the Sonnet was published along with Pico's commentary. This Sonnet too observes a classification of beauty similar to Pico's and, as will be seen later on, it also resembles Spenser's Hymns in many respects, specially in its Neo-Platonic tinge, and may well be regarded as their model. Pico writes: "From Material Beauty we ascend to

Similar gradation in Pico to whose pages Castiglione must have been indebted.

the first Fountain by six Degrees: The Soul through the sight represents to herself the Beauty of some particular Person, inclines to it, is pleased with it and while she rests here, is in the first, the most imperfect material degree. 2. She reforms by her imagination the image she hath received, making it more perfect as more spiritual; and separating it from Matter, brings it a little nearer Ideal Beauty. 3. By the light of the agent Intellect abstracting this Form from all singularity, she considers the universal Nature of Corporeal Beauty by itself; this is the highest degree the Soul can reach whilst she goes no further than Sense. 4. Reflecting upon her own Operation, the knowledge of universal Beauty, and considering that everything founded in Matter is particular, she concludes this universality proceeds not from outward Object, but her Intrinsecal Power; and reasons thus: If in the dimme Glasse of Material Phantasmes this Beauty is represented by virtue of my Light, it follows that, beholding it in the clear Mirrour of my substance devested of those Clouds, it will appear more

perspicuous: thus turning into her self, she findes the Image of Ideal Beauty communicated to her by the Intellect, the Object of Cellerstial Love. 5. She ascends from this Idea in her self. to the place where Celestial Venus is, in her proper form,: Who in the fullness of her Beauty not being comprehensible, by any particular Intellect, she as much as in her lies, endeavours to be united to the first Minde, the chiefest of Creatures, and the general Habitation of Ideal Beauty. Obtaining this, she terminates, and fixeth her journey; this is the sixth and last degree."

From a comparison of the two extracts it is clear that Castiglione the younger man must have taken his ideas directly from his elder. In Spenser the trace of Pico's theories is clear. In the Hymne in honour of Love only the first two stages of Pico find a place while the Hymne in Honour of Beautie gives in addition to these the third and fourth stages. The first stage is easily attained. The idealisation of the beauty of a woman involved in the second stage means attributing to her additional charms which in reality she does not possess. This is how Spenser describes the process.

Spenser is indebted to Pico and all his six stages are to be met with in his Hymns.

"Such is the powre of that sweet passion,
That it all sordid basenesse doth expell,
And the refyned mynd doth newly fashon
Unto a *fairer forme*, which now doth awell
In his high thought, that would it selfe excell,
Which he beholding still with constant sight,
Admires the mirrour of so heavenly light,
Whose image imprinting in his deepest wit,
He thereon feeds his hungrie fantasy,"

(H. L. St. 28-29.)

The "fairer form" is the idealised beauty. The third stage of Pico gives the notion of universal beauty which

is derived by generalisation from different specimens of earthly beauty. In the Hymn in honour of Beautie Spenser refers to this in the following lines :—

“ But they, which love indeede, looke otherwise,
With pure regard and spotlesse true intent,
Drawing out of the object of their eyes
A more refyned forme, which they present
Unto their mind, voide of all blemishment ;
Which it reducing to her first perfection,
Beholdeth free from fleshes fragile infection.”

(H. B. St. 31.)

In the fourth stage, the lover realises beauty purely as a spiritual thing and as an inherent part of his soul. It is described in the Stanzas immediately following the above.

“ And then conforming it unto the light,
Which in itself it hath remainging still,
Of that first Sunne, yet sparckling in his sight,
Thereof he fashions in his higher skill
An heavenly beautie to his fancies will ;
And, it embracing in his mind entyre,
The *mirrour of his owne thought doth admyre.*”

.....
Which seeing now so inly faire to be,
As outward it appeareth to the eye,
And with his spirits proportion to agree,
He thereon fixeth all his fantasie,
And fully setteth his felicitie ;”

The stages of the progress of the ideal lover in Spenser resemble the grades of the soul's ascent in the course of its heavenward flight in Benivieni, comments on whose Sonnet¹ by Pico are quoted above. The number of the grades in Benivieni is not six ; and the last grades of Benivieni are not handled by Spenser in his

Stages of love in Spenser compared with the grades of the soul's ascent in Benivieni.

¹ Sometimes entitled the Ode of Love,

Hymns to Beauty and to Love. These as well as the last two stages of Pico represent a plane of elevation partially reached in the Hymns to Heavenly Love and to Heavenly Beauty. Benivieni broadly divides the soul's ascent into three stages, represented by three forms of beauty—beauty of the body, of the heart and of the mind or Intellect.

“ One sun enkindles from that countenance blest
Through three refulgent glasses every grace
That mind and soul and body ~~her~~ adorns.
Whence first the eyes, next through these whence sojourns
Its other handmaid, does the heart embrace
That fairness, though less base,
Not full expressed ; until from many fair
The heart from matter tears,
Is shaped a type, wherein what nature rends
In all asunder, into one there blends.”

(Ode of Love St. 7.)

There are, however, subdivisions of each of these stages. The grades of Benivieni do not exactly correspond to Spenser's or to Pico's, yet a general resemblance among them is discernible. The idealised beauty of the beloved is reached in the second stage of the lover's progress in Pico and in Castiglione ; Spenser calls this beauty “ a fairer form.” Benivieni refers to this conception when he mentions heart as apprehending beauty.

—“ Next to these whence sojourns
Its other handmaid, *does the heart embrace*
That fairness, though less base,
Not full expressed ;”

The idea of universal beauty represented by the third stage of Pico and of Castiglione and referred to in Spenser's lines,

“ But they, which love indeede, looke otherwise,
.....
Drawing out of the object of their eyes
A more refyned forme, which they present
Unto their mind, voide of all blemishment ;”

is suggested in the following lines of Benivieni :—

“—from many fairs
The heart from matters tears,
Is shaped a type, wherein what nature rends
In all asunder, into one there blends.”

(Ode of Love St. 7.)

Beauty as an inherent part of the mind, comprehensible by the Intellect alone and the object of the lover's vision in the fourth stage of his progress as depicted by Pico, is thus referred to in Benivieni:—

“ a something sacred that invites
The gentle heart to heights
Where a more perfect beauty sits serene.
There not the shadow that on earth has been
Sole witness of true good, the heart shall find,
But clear light and the true sun's image true.
If gentle heart those sacred signs pursue,
It finds *that image planted in the mind.*”

(Ode of Love St. 8.)

The lover may be said to enjoy the product of his own mind when he idealises the beauty of his beloved as much as when he perceives it as part of his own soul. Common folk would look upon an advanced lover of this type as a prey to his own imagination. Benivieni describes such a lover as feeding on a “sweet error.”

“ On a sweet error the heart feeds, its dear
One deeming that which of itself was born.”

(Ode of Love. St. 7).

Again,

“ The soul that meetly lodging it, displays
It fairer in the rays
Of her own potency ; whence is decreed
That loving hearts on a *sweet error feed.*”

—(Ode of Love. St. 6).

Spenser expresses the same opinion about such a lover.

“ —he fashions in his higher skill
An heavenly beautie to his fancies will ;
And, it embracing in his mind entyre,
The mirrour of his owne thought doth admyre.”

(H. B. St. 32).

“ —lovers eyes more sharply sighted bee
Then other mens, and in deare loves delight
See more then any other eyes can see,”

(H. B. St. 34.)

The fertile imagination of the lover that invests his beloved with supernatural graces is however put by Shakespeare in the same category as the hallucination from which mad men suffer.

“ Lovers and mad men have such seething brains,
Such shaping fantasies, *that apprehend*
More than cool reason ever comprehends.
The lunatic, the lover and the poet,
Are of imagination all compact :
One sees more devils than vast hell can hold,
“ That is, the mad man : the lover, all as frantic,
Sees Helen’s beauty in a brow of Egypt.”

(A Midsummer Night’s Dream, Act V. Sc. I.)

Besides following the theories and reasonings of Plato, Spenser sometimes borrows stray sentences from his dialogues. Such are Phaedrus’ opinion that Love is the eldest of the gods and Agathon’s protest that he is the youngest. Spenser in his Hymne in honour of Love reconciles these two contradictory remarks in the manner of Ficinus. Ficinus tries to harmonise these two ideas by introducing into the theory a Christian element derived from the Neo-Platonism of the Pseudo-Dionysius. He says, “ Love, guiding the creator, was indeed, elder than the creation of the universe ; but that God afterwards

created the order of angels, and Love turned the angelic intelligences towards God ; so that *Love may be called at once the youngest, and the eldest, of the divine powers.*"¹ Spenser also borrows Diotima's myth of Plenty and Penury.² The theory of Cosmogonic Cupid as developed in the Hymne in honour of Love³ is, as already seen,⁴ based on the speech of Eryximachus in the Symposium. This idea of love has been reproduced in Colin Clouts Come Home Again in almost exactly the same language as has been used in the Hymn to Love ; *e.g.*, Spenser says,

"Through him the cold began to covet heat.
And water fire,———" etc.

¹ Cambridge History of English Literature, Vol. III.

² H. L., St. 8.

³ St. 12-14.

⁴ See Chapter on Friendship.

CHAPTER IX

NEO-PLATONISM AND CHRISTIANITY, —HEAVENLY LOVE

In the Hymne of Heavenly Love the subject is Heavenly Love which Spenser himself carefully distinguishes from ordinary earthly love on which he had written so profusely in his youth. In contrasting it with Heavenly Love, he uses rather strong language against the mortal passion and calls it a "mad fit" which he abjures in turning to "true love."

"Many lewd layes (ah ! woe is me the more !)
In praise of that mad fit which fooles call love,
I have in th' heat of youth made heretofore,
That in light wits did loose affection move ;
But all those follies now I do reprove,
And turned have the tenor of my string,
The heavenly prayes of true love to sing."

(Hymne of Heavenly Love, St. 2.)

The contrast is, however, brought out more clearly in the body of the Hymn and has its basis in the teachings of Christianity as well as in the blending of Christianity, Platonism and Neo-Platonism, which had kept scholars and churchmen busy for centuries. Christian Love signifies moral purity and sympathy for suffering humanity. The Platonic and Neo-Platonic theories of Love connected the yearning of the human soul with the notions of Beauty and Generation. Following

Meaning of Heavenly Love and its distinguishing characteristics.

Ficinus, Spenser attributes to the Christian God the Neo-Platonic love leading to generation.

The evolution of matter from the One through three stages was the subject-matter of the metaphysics of Plotinus. The One in Plotinus is the Good. It is indescribable, inconceivable and beyond being. The Intellect is not one but dual ; it has consciousness of subject and object and issues out of the One through a process of emanation. The Soul is multiform and similarly emanates from the Intellect. These three entities have corresponding degrees of beauty. This philosophical Trinity of Plotinus has been variously interpreted at various times. The scholars of the Renaissance busied themselves in studying and analysing Plato and Plotinus and attributing to them all sorts of meanings. Ficinus put a Platonic interpretation on the emanation-theory of Plotinus and also discovered in him traces of the Christian Trinity. All the three entities in Plotinus are beautiful and as the lower is derived from the higher, Ficinus applied to the process of emanation Diotima's theory of love and birth in Beauty. The feeling of the Intellect towards the Good is one of love and just as physical love leads to generation in the physical sense, intellectual love results in generation in the spiritual sense. Commenting on Bk. V. of *Ennead* - III. of Plotinus, Ficinus says, "The first intellect, God's, which is purely intellect, is most foreign to matter. Moreover we conclude that the intelligent soul, directly created by that first intelligence, God, and therefore intellectual in the highest degree, cannot be united to matter so as to have the common form of one composite. For, this intellectual soul is indeed intelligence, and simply a soul ; the life that springs from *this union* is, so to say, a soul, simply, a nature which now can be united with matter. Hence that intellectual soul

Following Ficinus and Plotinus, Spenser makes Heavenly Love the cause of the evolution of the universe from the Primal Essence or God.

in the world we call *the first reproductive principle*; the life further infused in the world we call *the second reproductive principle*. In both there exists a *perpetual love for the beauty of the divine mind*. It incites the first, i.e., *the intellectual soul to the production of a similar beauty in itself*; it incites the second to an expression of beauty in matter as perfect as possible As such an act is most intimate to the soul in the world and has a most intimate object, and is a most efficacious act, he (Plotinus) thinks that it produces an effect proportionate to this act. Since the act proceeds from an intelligence, it is an intelligible something, and as it proceeds from love, it is lovable, nay, it is a reality of love produced by an act of love..... By a most intimate act, a reality is produced within, in which the produced becomes the same as the essence of the producer, with this difference, however, that in the essence of the producer it propagates itself, and in the other is propagated. Moreover, it is distinct by a relation: since *this lovable reality, is, by the very fact that it exists, the reality both of the lover and the loved*.¹ A further difference lies in this that in the propagating reality there is rather a vision of the beautiful while in the propagated reality there is rather a pleasure in the possession of the beautiful."¹ Here Ficinus describes the third entity or the third form of beauty in Plotinus as the issue of the union of the other two entities. As there is a reproduction of physical beauty as a result of marital union, the intelligent soul contemplating the beauty of the One or Divinity produces a reality by an act of love. Spenser applies this feeling of love and desire for generation, without any alteration, to Divinity itself. This is the first kind of Heavenly Love in Spenser.

¹ Plotini Divini illius è Platonica familia Philosophi De rebus Philosophicis libri LIIII. Basilea, M. D. LIX.

" *It lov'd it selfe, because it selfe was faire ;
 • (For faire is lov'd ;) and of it selfe begot,
 Like to it selfe his eldest sonne and heire,
 Eternall, pure and voide of sinfull blot—*"

(H. H. L. St. 5.)

Ficinus saw Plato as well as Plotinus through a Christian medium and discovered in them Christian forms of thought; and in order to read into them Christian ideas he even distorted their text and meaning. Commenting on Plotinus' discourse on Love in *Ennead* III., Bk. V., Ficinus says, "Plotinus indeed, after Plato, supposes that the intellectual soul, when it thinks of God and tries to understand him and to long for him, conceives within

Influence of Christianity on Plato's theory of birth in beauty. Ficinus applies Christian ideas to Neo-Platonic Philosophy and is followed in this respect by Spenser.

itself not something quite imaginary, but a subsistent reality. In this, Plotinus had before his mind, I suppose, the *mystery of the Christian Trinity*...

..... Since the act proceeds from an intelligence, it is an intelligible something, and as it proceeds from love, it is

lovable, nay, it is a reality of love produced by an act of love." Spenser in his *Hymne of Heavenly Love* adopts this Christianised form of Neo-Platonism and identifies the Christian Trinity with the Trichotomy of Plotinus. Thus Heavenly Love in Spenser has reference to generation or the creation of the world,—the evolution or emanation of the manifold from the primal unity. It affords an illustration of Spenser's "traditional Platonism"; for, as shewn above, Spenser is indebted to various sources for this idea. The attributing of Love and desire for propagation to God or Spirit was not, strictly speaking, an original conception of the 16th and 17th century English poets as suggested by Dr. Harrison,¹ but was the

¹ Platonism in English Poetry, p. 67.

product of Platonic studies in Italy notably by Ficinus the orthodox Christian who was followed by Benivieni¹ and Pico.²

This Christian application of Plotinus' doctrine is handled by Spenser according to his own Calvinistic theology. Though in the Hymne of Heavenly Love he describes the Trinity of Plotinus—the three stages of emanation—as the three persons of the Christian Trinity, the variations from Plotinus are apparent. For instance, Divinity or the One is described by Plotinus as quiescent and unruffled by any movement. Spenser who evidently identifies the One with the "High Eternal Power" describes it as *loving itself*.—

"That High Eternall Powre, which now doth move
In all these things, *mov'd in itselfe by love*.
It lov'd itselfe, because it selfe was faire;"

Again, in Spenser the Son is not in any way inferior to the Father but equal to him in dignity.

"The firstling of his joy, in whom no jot
Of loves dislike or pride was to be found,
Whom he therefore with *equall honour crown'd*."

(H. H. L. St. 5).

In Plotinus, however, the second hypostasis is appreciably inferior to the One in essence as well as in beauty. The Soul in Plotinus is an emanation from the Intellect—the multiform issues out of the biform. But Spenser derives his third from both the Father and the Son.

"With him he raiged before all time prescribed,
In endlesse glorie and immortall might,
Together with that third from *them* derived,
Most wise, most holy, most almightie Spright!"

¹ Ode of Love, St. 3.

² Sec. XVIII. of Platonic Discourse on Love.

Whose kingdomes throne no thought of earthly wight
 Can comprehend, much lesse my trembling verse
 With equall words can hope it to rehearse."

(H. L. St. 6.)

This is in strict accordance with Calvin's theology.¹
 The last two lines of the above stanza also show that

Spenser's variations
 from Plotinus and
 Ficinus due to his
 strict Calvinism.

this 'third' or the Holy Ghost has been
 given a position equal to God's. This
 is strict Calvinistic Christianity but in
 Plotinus the third hypostasis or the Soul is inferior to
 the first and to the second. The Soul is moreover a
 strictly human possession and is not, as represented in
 Spenser's lines, beyond human comprehension.

The creation of angels is also in accordance with the
 Platonic theory. Its immediate source however is not
 the Symposium but the Timaeus where God is repre-
 sented as desiring good and beauty because He Himself
 is good and beautiful, and as creating the world on the
 model of his own beauty. "Let me tell you then why the
 creator made this world of generation. He was good,
 and the good can never have jealousy of any thing. And
 being free from jealousy he desired that all things should
 be as like himself as they could be. This is in the truest
 sense the origin of creation and of the world, as we shall
 do well in believing on the testimony of wise men; God
 desired that all things should be good and nothing bad,
 so far as this was attainable." Spenser says,

"Yet being pregnant still with powrefull grace,
 And full of fruitfull love, that loves to get
 Things like himselfe, and to enlarge his race,
 His second brood, though not in powre so great,
 Yet full of beautie, next he did beget
 An infinite increase of Angels bright,
 All glistring glorious in their Makers light."

(H. H. L. St. 8.)

¹ Mod. Phil., May, 1914, p. 3.

The second form of Heavenly Love in Spenser's Third Hymn is a strictly Christian idea. Heavenly Love is also equivalent to God's infinite mercy towards man. This love is equivalent to God's infinite mercy shown in His dealing with man—in the means provided by Him for the Expiation of his sin and his Redemption.

“—that great Lord of Love, which him at first
Made of meere love, and after liked well,
Seeing him lie like creature long accurst
In that deepe horror of despeyred hell,
Him, wretch, in doole would let no lenger dwell, •
But cast out that bondage to redeeme,
And pay the price, all were his debt extreeme.”

(II. H. L. St. 19.)

This stanza can be paralleled by these passages from I. John: “Hereby perceiye we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.”¹

“In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him.”²

“Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.”³

The third form of Heavenly Love means that state of our soul in which communion with God⁴ becomes possible. It is thus a state which in its charity, moral purity and goodness resembles Divinity itself. Heavenly Love is here almost the same as divine love described above, but it is presented as an Ideal to be attained by man and not as an attribute of God Himself. This love is to supplant the

In Spenser Heavenly Love means Christian piety.

¹ III. 16.

² IV. 9.

³ IV. 10.

⁴ In Spenser it refers to the Redemptive Love of God as typified in Christ and not to the Deity.

love of sensible beauty and the desire to enjoy it. As an inevitable corollary to this love of the Supreme Deity, the Bible mentions the love of our fellow-beings as our brothers. Plato had conceived of the supreme Reality as Good and Wisdom but Christianity had taught people to think of God as love. When Plato speaks of spiritual love he uses the term with reference to the beauty of Wisdom which enraptures and captivates the Intellect and the Soul, as physical beauty charms the eye. This love with its attendant form of beauty is dealt with in the "Hymne of Heavenly Beautie." But by "Heavenly Love" something different is meant in the latter part of the "Hymne of Heavenly Love." It means all that the Christian ideal implies,—infinite charity, piety, humility—all that constitutes Christian Perfection as typified in the life of Christ Himself. Realisation of this ideal is, in the language of Theology, communion with the Supreme Godhead, and this is the goal of human existence. When the Christian is asked to love God he is asked to march forward to this consummation. But how is this ideal to be realised? Not by successive stages of advance in knowledge, for knowledge is pride, and God has confounded the wisdom of the learned. Not by strength or virtue, for blessed are the weak and the lowly. It is to be attained through Humility and Charity, by shunning the things of the World and, lastly, "through the grace of God. This ideal is apparently Christian but the emphasis laid on grace is due to Spenser's strong Calvinism—his belief that man (unregenerated by grace) is worse than vile earth and "next to naught." This is also brought out in the condition on which he makes the regeneration of man and his communion with God to depend. Only His grace can lead him on to the ideal after he has been purified by contrition and strict penance.

“—let thy soule, whose sins his sorrows wrought,
Melt into teares, and gone in grieveld thought.
With sence whereof, whilest so thy softened spirit
Is inly toucht, and humbled with meeke zeale
Through meditation of his endlesse merit,
Lift up thy mind to th’ Author of thy weale,
And to his *soveraine mercie do appeale* :”

(H. H. L. St. 36-37.)

Though the ideal is Christian,* Spenser’s Platonism comes out in his handling of it—in the process recommended by him for its realisation. It is modelled on the progression in æsthetic and intellectual training as delineated in the Symposium and the Republic,—the

This Christian ideal is reached by means of a Platonic method, viz., the method of graded progress described in the Symposium.

lower (beauty) leading to the higher till the highest is reached. Applying this dialectical process to Christian training, Spenser makes the successive stages consist of the progressive knowledge of the different periods of Christ’s life commencing from His very birth, and of the different aspects of His character culminating in his self-immolation for the redemption of man. The aim of this knowledge is not intellectual training which is vain and useless, but a training in humility, sacrifice and other Christian virtues. The very language used by the poet goes to show that he had such a progression in view—he makes a beginning, passes through a middle stage and reaches an end.

“Lift up to him thy heavie clouded eyne,
That thou his soveraine bountie mayst behold,
And read, through love, his mercies manifold.
Beginne from first, where he enradled was
In simple cratch, wrapt in a wad of hay,
Betweene the toylefull Oxe and humble Asse,
.....
From thence reade on the storie of his life,

His humble carriage, his unfaulty wayes,
His cancred foes, his fights, his toyle, his strife,

.....
And looke at last, how of most wretched wights
He taken was, betrayd, and false accused ;
How with most scornefull taunts, and fell despightes,
He was revyld, disgrast, and foule abused ;
How scourgd, how crownd, how buffeted, how brused ;
And lastly, how twixt robbers crucifyde,
With bitter wounds through hands, through feet, and syde !”
(H. H. L. St. 32-35.)

Spenser speaks of meditation on the Crucifixion as furnishing the last stage of training for the Christian seeking the ideal. But he goes on to mention some other stages before the full realisation of the Ideal is described. The aspirant ‘melts into teares’ through contrition, he meditates ceaselessly on the merits of the Saviour and begs the grace of God. He shuns worldly love and gives himself up “unto him full and free.” It is only then that his purged soul feels the rapture of Heavenly Love. But even here Spenser’s description of this ideal love in the soul resembles Plato’s picture of the glorious vision which appears at the end of the long series of minor beauties in the Symposium. It is also an influence of Platonism that Spenser cannot describe this celestial love otherwise than as a beautiful object of vision.

Spenser in the manner of Plato describes the ideal as a vision.

“Then shall thy ravisht soule inspired bee
With heavenly thoughts farre above humane skil,
And thy bright radiant eyes shall plainely see,
Th’ Idee of his pure glorie present still
Before thy face, that all thy spirits shall fill
With sweete enragement of celestiaall love,
Kindled through sight of those faire things above.”

Contemplation of the life of Christ is rewarded with a vision of the “Idee of his pure glorie.” It means that

a training in the Christian virtues will fill the soul with His love; in other words, 'the man-Christ will lead the soul to God-Christ or Christ as God sees him, Christ as an aspect of Divinity and as merged in Him.'

The first and third forms of Heavenly love as explained above are not the same in kind. As already noted, the first form is philosophical—based on Plato and Plotinus, though with a coating of Christianity on it; while the second form is essentially Christian; though the handling of it is Platonic. The portrayal of the first kind of Heavenly Love takes the form of the evolution of the world and the soul from the One Highest reality.

The distinction between the Platonic and Neo-Platonic methods used by Spenser

This, as already indicated, is the emanation of Plotinus. This last kind of Heavenly Love is depicted as the ascent of the soul till it is merged in God-Christ. The progression is, of course, a Platonic idea but it is also the counter-process of the emanation of Plotinus. Emanation and absorption follow each other as the day does the night, and Neo-Platonism finds in this eternal and ceaseless 'process' the 'proper exercise of the Divine energy. The handling of this Neo-Platonic theme in poetry is not original or new in Spenser. Benivieni's Ode of Love is based on this topic. It traces the progress of the soul in its descent on the earth from Divinity and its return to that primal source.

"I tell how love from its celestial source
In Primal Good flows to the world of sense,
When it had birth, and whence
That moves the heavens, refines the soul, gives laws
To all; in men's hearts taking residence,
With what arms keen and ready in resource.
It is the gracious force
Which mortal mind from earth to heaven draws."

(Benivieni's Ode of Love, St. II.)

¹ Journal of English and Germanic Philology. Vol. 13. p. 424 and M. Phil. Vol. 8. p. 546.

In these lines Benivieni summarises the subject of his poem. The difference between Benivieni and Spenser is that Benivieni deals with the theme as a purely Neo-Platonic conception, while Spenser modifies Neo-Platonic Philosophy through the introduction of Christian ideas. Spenser, as seen above, also introduces variations in details whenever necessary to fit it in with his Calvinism.

CHAPTER X

HEAVENLY BEAUTY—MYSTICISM

Spenser describes Heavenly Beauty as something connected with the Deity and remote from the world which has to be left behind by anybody seeking to attain to it. It is therefore different from physical beauty, the origin of which has been discussed in the "Hymne in honour of Beautie" and "Hymne in honour of Love." Physical beauty can be apprehended by sense and described in language, but Spenser's words make it clear that his conception of Heavenly Beauty is different. He mentions Heavenly Beauty at the end of a series of beautiful physical objects only to suggest that it is more beautiful than these but exclaims at last that his tongue fails to describe it.

Characteristics of
Heavenly Beauty.

*"Yet is that Highest farre beyond all telling,
Fairer then all the rest which there appeare,
Though all their beauties joynd together were ;
How then can mortall tongue hope to expresse
The image of such endlesse perfectnesse ?
Cease then, my tongue ! and leud unto my my d
Leave to bethinke how great that beautie is,"*

(Hymne of Heavenly Beautie, St. 15-16.)

The tongue of the poet describes beauty visible to the eye, and what the tongue cannot describe is, therefore, immaterial, and hence for its apprehension

the help of the mind is necessary. Later on the poet says :—

“—gathering *plumes of perfect speculation*,
 To impe the wings of thy *high flying mynd*,
 Mount up aloft *through heavenly contemplation*,
 From this darke world, whose damps the soule do blynd,
 And, like the native blood of Eagles kynd.
 On that bright Sunne of Glorie fix thine eyes,”

(H. H. B., St. 20.)

Thus contemplation and speculation are the only way leading to this Beauty. The conception is Platonic. Beauty approachable not by sense but by the mind is the pivot of Platonic Philosophy. But to say that Heavenly Beauty is to be apprehended by the mind is, however, no adequate description of its nature—it is the beauty of the mind, Intellect or Truth itself.

The beauty of the mind or Intellect can be divided into two forms. In one form it is beauty apprehended as part of the mind of the perceiver ; here it is the beauty of the individual intellect. The second form of intellectual beauty is not the possession of any individual mind but is realised as ‘universal beauty’. Beyond these two forms is the third form of beauty which transcends all limitations of perception and intellection and can be realised through direct communion only (union or intuition). This is the Beauty of God. The distinction is not clearly recognised by Plato, though he observes a rough classification of this type. The beauty of the mind referred to in the speech of Diotima seems to mean beauty perceived as an inherent part of the individual mind. Diotima says elsewhere, “The true order of going or being led by another to the things of love, is to use the beauties of earth as steps along which he mounts upwards for the sake of that other

Plato's and Plotinus' discussions on spiritual beauty on which Spenser draws chiefly.

beauty, going from one to two and from two to all fair forms, and from fair forms to fair actions, and from fair actions to fair notions, until from fair notions he arrives at the notion of absolute beauty, and at last knows what the essence of beauty is." Here "fair notions," "notion of absolute beauty" and "the essence of beauty" mean respectively the first, the second and the third form of spiritual beauty (*i.e.*, God's beauty) as described above. The "abundance of beauty" which is distinguished from "the beauty of one youth, or man or institution," and the "single science which is the science of beauty everywhere" mentioned as the last two rungs of the famous ladder of ascent in the Symposium, seem to stand for the second and third forms of beauty as classified above, *i.e.*, universal beauty and the beauty of the Deity. Again, in the Phaedrus the being or "true knowledge" visited by the winged soul during its heavenly career may typify the second as well as the third form of spiritual beauty. Plotinus clearly distinguishes the beauty of the Deity from that of the most universal truth—the One from the Intellect. Intellect is self-conscious while the One transcends all experience and consciousness and is realised in "mystic union." "The good and the beautiful, are the same...in the first rank we must place the beautiful, and consider it as the same with the good; from which immediately emanates intellect as beautiful."¹ It has already been mentioned how the lover in Pico and in Castiglione reaches his goal through the progressive realisation of six forms of beauty. The last three forms can be identified with the three kinds of spiritual beauty mentioned above. Thus their fourth stage of beauty is the beauty of the particular mind—truth or sapience *sub specie temporis* as distinguished from Truth *sub specie*

¹ Plotinus—Essay on the Beautiful.

*aeternitatis*¹ represented by their fifth grade which is universal beauty or the beauty of universal Truth. Spenser has dealt with the first four stages of Pico and Castiglione including truth *sub specie temporis* in his first two hymns,² and takes up universal Beauty or Truth *sub specie aeternitatis* in his hymn to Heavenly Beauty. Heavenly Beauty in Spenser is not the beauty of God but of universal Truth. Hence though God is mentioned here and there in the Hymn as the Supreme Ruler, Spenser represents Truth as His seat and Sapience as His beloved sitting on His very bosom. It is her beauty that is celebrated throughout the poem, and stanza after stanza dwells on her supernatural charm and grace. Spenser, unable to present a visible image of Sapience, writes,

“The fairenesse of her face no tongue can tell ;
For she the daughters of all women’s race,
And Angels eke, in beautie doth excell,
Sparkled on her from God’s owne glorious face,

.....
How then dare I ..
Presume to picture so divine a wight
Or hope t’expresse her least perfections part,
Whose beautie fills the heavens with her light.”

(H. H. B., St. 30, 33.)

According to the Christian theology, Sapience would stand for Logos, the mind of God, as distinguished from His Redemptive Love which is typified by Christ and dealt with by Spenser in the third Hymn. The figuring of Sapience as a feminine being beloved of God, is due to Gnostic influence.³

¹ M. Phil., Vol. 8, p. 552

² For a pointed contrast between physical beauty and beauty of the individual mind, see the Epithalamion.

³ Mod. Phil., Vol. 8, p. 546

It has been seen¹ how Benivieni's Ode of Love deals with the various grades of beauty rising up to the beauty of the individual mind. Benivieni however passes beyond this and realises abstract or universal beauty (the fifth stage of Pico and Castiglione) represented in Spenser by Sapience.

Benivieni

"If the gentle heart these sacred signs pursue,
It finds that image planted in the mind :
Thence soars to more refined •
And pure light circumfused about that sun
By whose eternal, one
Glory illumined, loving, are made fair
The mind, the soul, the world, and all things true."

(Ode of Love, St. 8.)

The image implanted in the mind is thus a step of ascent leading to the Beauty that imparts grace to every thing in this world. Benivieni, like Spenser, shrinks from the next step,—from coming face to face with the blinding beam of God's beauty.

Though Heavenly Beauty is described as the beauty of Knowledge or Intellect, it is not altogether divorced from morality. According to Plato it is Good and so is it according to Plotinus. Spenser therefore makes Righteousness the sceptre of the Deity and Truth his seat.

"His scepter is the rod Righteousnesse,
With which he bruseth all his foes to dust.
And the great Diagon strongly doth repress,"

(H. H. B. 23.)

Spenser is indebted to Plato's Philosophy not only for his conception of Heavenly Beauty but also for the means of reaching and apprehending it. In the Symposium Diotima recommends a graded realisation of the Good

¹ Chapter VII

through successive stages of beauty. Spenser uses this method of progression, but with a difference. According to Diotima man should first love one beautiful form only; if he profits by this lesson and thinks deeply on it, he will see that all other forms have the same beauty and that beauty in matter is always the same.

Spenser uses the method of progression of Plato to reach Heavenly Beauty;

From this, again, he will learn that the beauty of ideas is finer than sensible beauty. From the beauty of ideas as perceived in laws and institutions he will rise to the apprehension of beauty in the sciences which are of a more universal application, and leaving this, he will at last approach the one science, "the science of beauty" and will enjoy the vision of the vast sea of Beauty. It will appear from the above that for purposes of ascent from one stage of beauty to another Plato recommends the gradual purgation of the sense element in the human soul, which involves the exercise of the intellect or the faculty of generalisation. Generalisation is involved in having an idea of abstract physical beauty from a number of beautiful material objects. Similarly the beauty of the sciences is reached through generalisation from the beauty of laws and institutions and a similar process is used for comprehending 'the science of beauty.' Spenser, however, does not use this potent instrument. He propounds the theory that things are beautiful in proportion as they are physically distant from this gross earth, since the sea which encircles the Earth is finer and more beautiful than it and the stars farther away are finer than the sea.¹ The firmament again—"that mightie shining christall wall"—is finer than the stars, the "pyles of flaming brands." Having established his theory on the facts supplied by this Lucretian cosmology, Spenser extends

¹ Spenser here follows the cosmology of Lucretius.

its application to the Ptolemaic Universe and beyond it to the habitation of the Platonic Idea and lastly to the abodes of the angels of the Christian Hierarchy—Powers, Potentates, Princes and Dominations.¹ The progression, is not from the concrete to the abstract as in Plato but from the less distant to the more distant, and the most beautiful is supposed to be situated at the greatest distance from the earth. This mode of ascent presupposes a similarity between rarefied sensible beauty and the beauty of Truth, and its object is to realise the latter through the refinement of the former. But sensible beauty, though very fine, cannot shake off altogether its materiality. The nature of Sapience is quite different from it. Spenser admits the failure of his first dialectical flight

but he fails because his ladder of ascent comprises only images of sensible beauty.

as incapable of giving any idea of the “essential parts” of Heavenly Beauty.

It shows only the “utmost parts” of it.

The failure is the inevitable outcome of the method applied, *viz.*, the gradual refinement of physical beauty in the hope of reaching through it the beauty of Truth. But the difference between physical beauty and Truth is a difference of kind, not of degree only. Spenser therefore attempts a second ascent.

“—lend unto *my myne*

Leave to bethinke how great that beauntie is,

Whose utmost part so beautifull I fynd;

How much more *those essentiall parts* of his,

His truth, his love, his wisdom, and his blis,

His grace, his doome, his mercy, and his might,

By which he lends us of himselfe a sight!”

(H. H. B., St. 16.)

The poet begins this time also with images of physical beauty, *e.g.*, the handiwork of God but, following the

¹ H. H. B., St. 11-14.

teaching of Diotima, he uses them merely as stepping-stones to the realisation of a higher beauty, *viz.*, the beauty of spiritual and intellectual qualities—the beauty of God's wisdom and goodness as displayed in His creation and, by gradual ascent up the new path and through the exercise of his powers of contemplation, rises up to the most abstract hypostasis—Heavenly Beauty or Wisdom.

The true ladder
of ascent comprises
grades of spiritual
beauty,

- “The meanes, therefore, which unto us is lent
Him to behold, is on his workes to looke,
Which he hath made in beauty excellent.
And in the same, as in a brasen booke,
To reade enregistered in every nooke
His goodnesse, which his beautie doth declare :
For all thats good is beautifull and faire.”

• (H. H. B., St. 19.)

- “Thence gathering plumes of *perfect speculation*,
To impe the wings of thy high flying mynd,
Mount up aloft through *heavenly contemplation*,
From this darke world, whose damps the soule do bynd,
And, like the native brood of Eagles kynd,
On that bright Sunne of Glorie fixe thine eyes,
Clear'd from grosse mists of fraile infirmities.”

• (H. H. B., St. 20.)

The right method of rising up to the realisation of Truth, as latterly used by Spenser and as differentiated from that other method of apprehending it through the refinement of material beauty is also suggested by Plato. In the Republic Plato affirms that Truth cannot be attained except through the activity of Intellect, known as dialectic, and he distinguishes dialectic from the arts and the sciences. “And so, Glaucon, we have at last arrived at the hymn of dialectic. This is that strain which is

of the intellect only.....Assuredly none will argue that
 , there is any other method of compre-
 suggested in the hending by any regular process all true
 Republic. existence or of ascertaining what each
 thing is in its own nature; for, the arts in general are
 concerned with the desires or opinions of men, or are
 cultivated with a view to production and construction...
 and as to the mathematical sciences which, as we were
 saying, have some apprehension of true being, they only
 dream about being but never can they behold the waking
 reality so long as they leave the hypotheses which they
 use unexamined, and are unable to give an account of
 them. Then *dialectic*, and *dialectic alone*, goes directly to
 the first principle, and is the only science which does away
 with hypotheses in order to make her ground secure.”¹

Learning the *wisdom* of God from an examination
 of His handiwork is also a Christian idea. Calvinism with
 its strong insistence on the baseness and sinfulness of
 human nature, has repeatedly warned man against the
 boldness of attempting to pry into mystery of the Deity
 Himself and asked him to rest content with studying His
 manifestations in the world of creation. “Hence it is
 obvious, that in seeking God, the most direct path and
 the fittest method is, not to attempt with presumptive
 curiosity to pry into his essence, which is rather to
 be adored than minutely discussed, but to contemplate
 him in his works, by which he draws near, becomes
 familiar, and in a manner communicates himself to
 us.”² This Calvinistic idea in Spenser prevents him
 from following Plato and Plotinus to the last in their
 upward march towards Perfect Beauty. In Plato the
 last rung of the ladder is called the “Essence of
 Beauty” which is higher than the beauty of the

¹ Republic, Bk. VII.

² Institute, §.

sciences or Absolute Beauty. It is "a nature of wondrous beauty, nor growing and decaying, or waxing and waning; in the next place, not fair in one point of view and foul in another,or in the likeness of a face or hands or any other part of the bodily frame, or in any form of speech or knowledge, nor existing in any other being; as for example, an animal, whether in earth or heaven, but beauty only, absolute, separate, simple, and everlasting," and Plato uses "the beauties of earth as steps along which he mounts upwards for the sake of that other beauty." In Plato the last stage is attainable,

Spenser's Calvinism
interferes with his
pursuit of Heavenly
Beauty.

though there is naturally great difficulty in the way, and Plato describes the consummation as communion with God.

In Plotinus the beauty of the soul leads on to the beauty of Intellect and this latter in its turn to the vision of the One and the Good. The beauty of the Good is indeed beyond intellection, and it is attainable only in mystic raptures of which Plotinus himself is said to have had personal experience. Rare and difficult as is the realisation of this primal Beauty, it is never regarded as impossible. "Let us, therefore, *re-ascend to the good itself, which every soul desires and in which it can alone find repose.*"¹ But in Spenser's Hymn, Good, the ultimate beauty remains hidden and is unattainable. The utmost that a human being can hope to attain to is the beauty of Sapience which stands for Intellect.

"Before the footstool of his Majesty
Throw thy selfe downe, with trembling innocence,
Ne dare looke up with corruptible eye
On the dreadface of that great Deity,
For feare, lest if he chaunce to looke on thee,
Thou turne to nought, and quite confounded be."

(H. H. B., St. 21.)

¹ Plotinus' Essay on the Beautiful

Even the vision of Sapience is the reward of the elect.

"But who so may, thise happie man him hold,
Of all on earth *whom God so much doth grace*
And lets his *owne Belored* to behold ;"

(H. H. B. St. 35.)

The last step in the ascent gives a view not of God but of the "soveraine light"—the light which issuing from God beautifies Sapience and which kindles a love of God in the beholder.

"And looke at last up to that Soveraine Light,
From whose pure beams al perfect beauty springs,
That kindleth love in every godly spright
Even the love of God ;"

(H. H. B., St. 43.)

There is a vein of mysticism in Spenser, clearly discernible in his hymns, especially in the last two. Plato's influence on Spenser was deep-rooted, and "Plato is, after all, the father of European mysticism," though he does not enunciate any canon and though mysticism does not appear in him in a very pronounced form.¹ In Plotinus, however, mysticism is very prominent and "for the mediæval mystics Platonism meant the Philosophy of Plotinus adapted by Augustine."² Plotinus was the great source of mysticism in Italy during the Renaissance and mysticism lent its colour to the theories of love propounded by the Italian Platonists. In Spenser too we find not the subdued mystic trend but this traditional mysticism and the Hymns afford an

¹ Inge's Christian Mysticism, p. 78. Inge quotes Emerson's sentence "Mysticism finds in Plato all its text."

² Inge.

illustration of it as is done by Pico's Discourse and Benivieni's Ode of Love, the influence of which on Spenser has already been pointed out. The first creed of Mysticism is that the inner being in man has a distinct faculty for the apprehension of the Divine. This faculty is distinguished both from sense-perception and intellection or ratiocination. As Inge puts it, "We have an organ or faculty for the discernment of spiritual truth which, in its proper sphere, is as much to be trusted as the organs of sensation in theirs." The second proposition of mysticism is that man, "in order to know God, must be a partaker of the Divine nature."¹ "Without Holiness no man may see the Lord." Purgation as a means of purification and of partaking of the Divine nature is a necessary co-llary to such a theory.

The mystic apprehension of Reality is more clear, and more vivid than ordinary perception. It is frequently portrayed as a *vision*, for to man sight is the most reliable mode of perception. In the Phædrus Truth, the highest Reality is described as an *object of vision*. In the Symposium also the Beauty of Absolute Existence which is the last rung in the ladder of dialectic ascent, is *figured forth as a glorious vision*. About *this vision* Plotinus says, "The perception of the highest God is not effected by science nor by intelligence, like other intelligibles, but by the presence of him, (*i.e.*, the good) which is a mode of knowledge superior to that of science. But the *vision of him* is now the work of one solicitous to perceive him." In Spenser's Hymn also the perception of Heavenly Beauty or Sapience is figured as a *vision*.

The creeds of mysticism

Intuition figured as vision.

¹ Inge, p. 6.

"Let Angels, which her goodly face behold
And see at will, her sovereign praises sing,"

(H. H. B., St. 34.)

That man is said to be happy who is permitted by God to see His beloved or Sapience. •

"For in the view of her celestiall face
All joy, all blisse, all happinesse have place."

(H. H. B. St. 35.)

But a vision of this kind is not possible unless the beholder becomes *consubstantial with the object of his vision*. Plotinus says, "He, however, will not arrive at the vision of him.....he, I say, will not behold this light who attempts to ascend to the vision of the supreme while he is *drawn downwards by those things* which are an impediment to the vision.....He, therefore, *who has*

Intuition is possible only when the subject is consubstantial with the object to be perceived

**not yet arrived thither*, but either on account of the above-mentioned obstacle is deprived of this vision or through the *want of reason which may conduct him to*

it. Such ² one may consider himself as the cause of his disappointment through these impediments, and should endeavour by separating himself from all things to be alone."¹ Thus the spiritual in man ought to separate itself from the trammels of sense in order to have similitude to Reality. Plotinus continues, "It is here necessary that the *perceiver and the thing perceived should be similar to each other before true vision can exist*. Thus the sensitive eye can never be able to survey the orb of the sun, unless strongly endowed with solar fire and participating largely of the vivid ray. Everyone therefore must become divine, and of godlike beauty, before he can gaze upon a god and the beautiful itself."

¹ Plotinus on the Good or the One, tr. T. Taylor.

Hence in the Hymne of Heavenly Love Spenser begs *Love to lift him up*, so that he might have a vision of Heavenly Love and sing its praises.

*"Love, lift me up upon thy golden wings,
From this base world unto thy heavens hight,
Where I may see those admirable things
Which there thou workest by thy sovaine might,"*

(Hymne of Heavenly Love, St. 1.)

There is a similar invocation to Truth in the "Hymne of Heavenly Beautie."

*"Vouchsafe then, O thou most Almighty Spright!
From whom all guifts of wit and knowledge flow
To shed into my breast some sparkling light
Of thine eternal Truth, that I may show
Some litle beames to mortall eyes below"—*

(H. H. B. St. 2.)

Benivieni expresses a similar idea in the first stanza of his Ode of Love: the notion that similitude is necessary between two things before there can be realisation of the one by the other is prominent there also.

*"Love, from whose hands suspended hang the reins
Unto my heart, who in his high empire
Scorns not to feed the fire
By him enkindled in me long ago,
Would move my tongue, my faculties inspire
To tell what my enamored breast retains
Of him.....
Since love has promised to my sluggish thought
Those wings wherewith he entered first my breast " etc.*

When the two things, the beholder and the object of vision become similar, there results the mystic union. About this final union of consubstantial things Plotinus says, "Perhaps, however, neither must it be said that he sees, but that he is the thing seen; if it is necessary

to call these two things, *i.e.*, the perceiver and the thing perceived. *But both are one though it is bold to assert this.....* since, therefore (in the conjunction with Deity) there were not two things, but the perceiver was one with the thing perceived, *as not being (properly speaking) vision but union.*"¹ This aspect of mysticism is to be noted

and is transformed into, and united with, it. Plotinus, Pico, Benivieni and Spenser handle this aspect of mysticism.

in Pico also. He believes that the highest reality is secured only when the soul is transformed into and immersed in it, that man can comprehend Divinity only by being Divine. * He

writes, "The greater part of Men reach no higher than this (enjoyment of sensible beauty); others more perfect, remembering that more perfect Beauty which the soul (before immerst in the Body) beheld, are inflamed with an incredible desire of reviewing it, in pursuit whereof, they separate themselves as much as possible from the Body, of which the soul (returning to its first dignity) becomes absolute Mistress. This is the Image of celestial Love, by which Man ariseth from one perfection to another, till his soul (wholly united to the Intellect) *is made an Angel. Purged from Material dross and transformed into spiritual flame by this Divine Power, he mounts up to the Intelligible Heaven, and happily rests in his Father's bosome.*" Referring to those who realise the Primal Being or have the privilege of approaching Heavenly Beauty, Spenser says,

"None thereof worthy be, but those whom shee
Vouchsafeth to her presence to receave,
And letteth them her lovely face to see,
Whereof such wondrous pleasures they conceave,
And sweete contentment, that it doth bereave
Their soule of sense, through infinite delight,
And them transport from flesh into the spright."

(H. H. B. St. 37.)

¹ Plotinus on the Good or the One.

The 8th Stanza of Benivieni's sonnet puts in a nutshell the process by which human soul is refined and attains consubstantiation with the Primal Essence prior to its full realisation, *i.e.*, prior to union with it.

"The soul thus entering in the Minde,
There such uncertainty doth finde,
That she to clearer Light applies
Her Armes, and near the first sun flies."

In its conception of Abstract Beauty the Gli Eroici Furori of Giordano Bruno bears some resemblance to Spenser's Hymne of Heavenly Beautie and it is just possible that there was some actual connection between these two works, though Professor Elton¹ definitely negatives the suggestion of Bruno's influence on Spenser. An exposition of the mystic creed is the object of both these works and the method of communion with the Divine is borrowed from the Philosophy of the Neo-Platonists by both. Here apparently is a field for investigation. Intellectual Beauty is the object of Bruno's passion as Sapience is the object of search in Spenser's Hymne of Heavenly Beautie. Like Spenser, Bruno describes the

Heavenly Beauty in
Spenser, Bruno and
Shelley.

charms of the object of his desire with an ecstatic rapture which even passion for a woman could hardly have inspired.² As steps leading to this ultimate Beauty, Bruno like Spenser describes other forms of beauty arranged according to their fineness. Corresponding to these forms of beauty, there are also forms of love in a similar grade of purification. These things strongly suggest Bruno's influence on Spenser's Hymn.

Bruno's poem has often been compared with Shelley's Hymn to Intellectual Beauty. So far as its bare subject-matter is concerned, this poem may also be compared

¹ Modern studies—Giordano Bruno in England.

² Owen's Sceptics of the Italian Renaissance, p. 312.

with Spenser's Hymne of Heavenly Beautie. In both the ideal is Intellectual Beauty. But Shelley's conception of Intellectual Beauty and his handling of it are altogether different. The traditional mysticism of the Neo-Platonists finds no place in Shelley's poem. Though in Spenser Intellectual Beauty has an exalted position, it can be realised inwardly through successive stages of ascent beginning with the sensible beauty of this mundane region as the first step. In Shelley Intellectual Beauty is not realisable as such; it rather manifests itself as an added grace to the things of the world. Neither is there in Shelley any ladder of ascent to this final Reality, for which Spenser is indebted to Plato. Shelley's Intellectual Beauty resembles rather the Pattern of Beauty in Plato's *Timaeus* and in Spenser's Hymne in honour of Beautie, which irradiates the things of this world and imparts beauty and grace to them. Shelley's apostrophe to Beauty runs thus:

" Spirit of Beauty, that dost consecrate
 With thine own hues all thou dost shine upon
 Of human thought or form."¹

¹ Hymn to Intellectual Beauty.

CHAPTER XI

THE SONNETS—NEO-PLATONISM THROUGH FRENCH • SONNETEERS.

The debts of the Elizabethan Sonnet to foreign literatures have recently been very accurately estimated.¹ Probably in no other branch of English Literature is outside influence so clearly marked. The obligation is

Foreign influence on
the Elizabethan Sonnet.
—French and Italian.

not confined to the literary form alone but very often takes the shape of a close imitation of sentiment and imagery and a literal translation of the language. The pioneers of the English Sonnet, Wyatt and Surrey, followed Petrarch mainly, while their successors drew considerably on the French imitators of Petrarch, the Sonneteers of the La Pléiade School.

The Sonnet in the 15th and 16th centuries was dominated by the Petrarchan spirit and his note of spiritual love. The conventional sonnet has always this stereotyped

How far the conception
of love in the
Petrarchan Sonnet was
Platonic and how far
chivalric.

theme. It is difficult to trace the source of spiritual love in Petrarch. Italy in Petrarch's days was undergoing a vast transformation. Various intellectual and moral forces had come together out of which the Italian Renaissance was to be produced. Free thought, Catholicism, the decaying spirit of chivalry and an interest in the classics were some of the factors of the movement. It is undoubtedly true that the homage paid to woman in Petrarch's sonnets had its source in chivalric love and in

¹ Sir Sidney Lee's Introduction to the Elizabethan Sonnets.

the poetry of the Trouvères and the Troubadours. Says Owen, "His own sonnets are, to a great extent, polished echoes and reproductions of the old poem of chivalry; and so far he may be called a successor of the Trouvères and Troubadours."¹ But the elevation of woman to an idealistic extreme—her identification with a spiritual and moral being—was the result of the "new cultus of the Virgin, which since the time of St. Bernard had taken such vigorous root in the religious sentiment of Catholicism."² The physical charms with which the imagination of religious enthusiasts invested the Virgin were attributed to the earthly mistress to whom was also transferred the worship worthy to be offered to the Virgin. But the intellectual note in the sonnets of Petrarch and the veiled identification of the lady with Truth can only be due to the direct influence of Plato or to Neo-Platonism.

This conception of ideal love formed of so many elements passed into other countries along with the sonnet form. After Petrarch Italian Platonists like Ficinus, Pico and Castiglione elaborated the Platonic idea of love which means love of intellectual beauty. The French sonneteers, indebted as they were to Petrarch for the sonnet-form and for the literary treatment of the stereotyped theme of spiritual love between man and woman, availed themselves of the more refined theories of the later Italian Platonists and used them in their sonnets. Spenser like other Elizabethan sonneteers borrowed much from the La Pléiade School and many of the *Platonic ideas in his sonnets* are to be traced *not directly* to Plato or his commentators or to Petrarch, but to the productions of Ronsard, Du Bellay, Desportes, Pontus de Thiard and other French poets of this school.

Further elaborations of the Platonic idea of love after Petrarch by Italian Neo-Platonists appear in French Sonnets whence they are taken by Spenser.

¹ Sceptics of the Italian Renaissance.

- Owen, p 50.

It is beyond the scope of this chapter to point out the Petrarchism of Spenser's sonnets. Though Spenser was more indebted to the French school than to Petrarch directly, there is no lack of stereotyped Petrarchan conceits in his sonnets because, as mentioned above, the French school was not only soaked in the Petrarchan spirit but was also a close imitator of Petrarch—of his imagery and conceits in all their details. Its borrowings from the Italian Neo-Platonists were super-imposed on this Petrarchism and did not supplant it.

It has already been discussed how in his Hymns

The stages of lovers' progress found in Pico reappear in Spenser's Sonnets through the La Pléiade School.

Spenser is indebted to the refinements on the idea of Platonic Love by Ficinus, Pico and Castiglione. According to Pico and Castiglione there are six stages of a lover's progress towards the final realisation of Beauty. The first is the impression of the beauty of his beloved on his mind, the second is the idealisation of this beauty, the third is the universalisation of beauty, the fourth is the realisation of the beauty of the beloved as an inherent part of the lover's own mind. This is what constitutes the 'Idea' of her beauty. In the fifth stage beauty is realised as an Absolute Entity. The first stage is represented by Pontus de Thiard in his *Erreurs Amoureuses* where he contrasts the impression of the lady's visage on the lover's heart with her portrait.

“ Quelqu'un voyant la belle pourtraiture
De ton visage en un tableau depeinte,
S'emerveilloit de chose si bien feinte,
Et qui suivoit de si pres la nature.

Helás, pensay-je, Amour par sa peinture,
A mieux en moy cette beauté èmpainte
Cette beauté tant cruellement sainte,
Que, l'adorant, elle me devient dure.

Car ce tableau par main d'homme tracé,
Au fil des ans pourroit estre effacé,
Ou obscurci, perdant sa couleur vive :

Mais la memoire, empreinte en ma pensee,
De sa beauté ne peut estre effacee
Au laps du temps, au moins tant que je vive."

In Spenser sonnets No. XLV and XXII describe this stage ; in both what is reflected on the lover's mind is the full image of the beloved.

The first stage in Pontus de Thiard and in Spenser.

"Leave, lady ! in your glasse of cristall cleene,
Your goodly selfe for evermore to vew ;
And in my selfe, my inward selfe, I meane,
Most lively lyke behold your semblant trem.
Within my hart, though hardly it can shew
Things so divine to vew of earthly eye,
The fayre Idea of your celestiall hew
And every part remains immortally :
And were it not that, through your cruelty,
• With sorrow dimmed and deform'd it were,
• *The goodly ymage of your visnomy,*
Clearer then cristall, would therein appere."

"This holy season, fit to fast and pray,
Men to devotion ought to be inclynd :
Therefore, I lykewise, on so holy day,
For my sweet Saynt some service fit will find.
Her temple fayre is built within my mind,
In which her glorious ymage placed is ;
On which my thoughts doo day and night attend,
Lyke sacred priests that never thinke amisse !"

The *idea of Beauty* or Beauty realised as part of the individual mind constitutes the fourth stage. Spenser refers to this notion in sonnets No. LXXVIII and LXXXVII.

The fourth stage in Du Bellay, Pontus de Thiard and in Spenser.

"I seeke her bowre with her late presence deckt ;
 Yet nor in field nor bowre I her can fynd ;
 Yet field and bowre are full of her aspect :
 But, when myne eyes I thereunto direct,
They ydly back returne to me agayne :
 And, when I hope to see theyr trew object,
 I fynd my selfe but fed with fancies vayne.
 Cease then, myne eyes, to seeke her selfe to see ;
 And let my thoughts behold her selfe in mee."

"Ne ought I see, though in the clearest day,
 When others gaze upon theyr shadowes vayne,
 But th' onely image of that heavenly ray,
 Whereof some glance doth in mine eie remayne.
Of which beholding the Idæa playne,
Through contemplation of my purest part,
 With light thereof I doe my selfe sustayne,
 And thereon feed my love-affamisht hart.
 But with such brightnesse whylest I fill my mind,
 I starve my body, and mine eyes doe blynd."

Du Bellay refers to this "Idée" in his *L'Olive*. It is not however certain whether he means uniyersal beauty or beauty only as part of the mind of the lover.

"Pourquoy te plaist l'obscur de nostrejour,
 Si pour voler en un plus clair sejour,
 Tu as au dos l'aile bien empanee ?
 La, est le bien que tout esprit desire,
 La, le repos ou tout le monde aspire,
 La, est l'amour, la, plaisir encore.
 La, ô mon ame au plus hault ciel guidee !
 Tu y pouras recognoistre l'Idée
 De la beauté, qu'en ce monde j'adore."

Pontus de Thiard too refers to the 'Idée.' Thus he says :

"Mon esprit ha heureusement porté
 Au plus beau ciel sa force outrecuidée
 Pour s'abreuver en la plus belle Idée
 D'où le pourtrait j'ai pris de ta beauté,"

Spenser in his sonnets does not actually describe the realisation of the last form of Beauty or the Beauty of God, but in Sonnet No. LXXX he hints at the progressive realisation of a *higher entity* by the human soul and regards woman's beauty as a step to it.

“—give leave to me, in pleasant mew
To sport my muse, and sing my loves sweet praise ;
The contemplation of whose heavenly her,
My spirit to an higher pitch will rayse,”

A similar notion is expressed in Du Bellay's *Sonnets de Honneste Amour* where the inspiring and purifying influence of female beauty is dwelt on.

“Ces deux soleilz, deux flambeaux de mon âme,
Pour me rejoindre à la divinité
Percent l'obscur de mon humanité
Par les rayons de leur jumelle flâme.”

Sonnet No. LXXIX sets forth the nature of the Supreme Beauty which is called the “true beantie.” Spenser however speaks of it, in the manner of Plato, as the source of all material beauty including the beauty of his beloved.

The fifth or sixth
stage in Ronsard and
in Spenser.

“Men call you fayre, and you doe credit it,
For that your selfe ye dayly such doe see :
But the trew fayre, that is the gentle wit,
And vertuous mind, is much more prayd of me :
For all the rest, how ever fayre it be,
Shall turne to nought and loose that glorious hew ;
But onely that is permanent and free
From frayle corruption, tha' doth flesh ensew.
That is true beantie: that doth argue you
To be divine, and borne of heavenly seed ;
Derived from that fayre Spirit, from whom al true
And perfect beauty did at first proceed :”

The conception of the Prime source of Beauty here is the same. as in the Hymne in honour of Beautie. In sonnet No. CLXVII of his *Amours*, Ronsard expresses his vehement desire of 'shuffling off the mortal coil' and of being immersed in Infinite Beauty.

" Je veux brusler, pour m'en-voler aux Cieux
 Tout l'imparfait de ceste escorce humaine,
 M'éternisant comme le fils d'Alcemeine,
 Qui tout en feu s'assit entre les Dieux.
 Ja mon esprit, chatouillé de son mieux,
 Dedans ma chair rebelle se promeine,
 Et ja le bois de sa victime ameine
 Pour s'enflammer aux rayons de tes yeux.
 O saint brasier ! ô feu chastement beau !
 Las ! brule moi d'un si chaste flambeau,
 Qu' abandonnant ma depouille connue,
 Net, libre et nud, je vole d'un plein saut
 Jusques au Ciel, pour adorer le haut
 L'autre beauté dont la tienne est venue !" •

In the last two lines Ronsard suggests like Spenser that worldly beauty is derived from Absolute Beauty in Heaven. In his *Erreurs Amoureuses* Pontus de Thiard sings similarly of Divine Beauty which is also described as the Universal Idea.

" Père divin, supience eternelle,
 Commencement et fin de toute chose,
 Où en pourtrait indeleble repose
 De l'Univers, l'Idée universelle :"

Spenser's debt to the French sonneteers in respect of his Platonism has been dealt with here only in outline. To do justice to the topic it is necessary to go into it more fully. Though Platonic ideas in Spenser's sonnets have filtered through Petrarch and the La Pléiade School, there are instances where the debt to Plato seems to be direct.

Beauty causing amazement in sonnet No. III reminds
Pure Platonic ideas • one of the Phædrus. The immense
in Amoretti. power for good attributed to chaste love
and beauty in sonnet No. III is also a purely Platonic idea
occurring in the speech of Phædrus in the Symposium,
though it is common in Petrarch also. Spenser deals with
such chaste love in the third book of the Faerie Queene.
